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CHELSEA WILLIAMS
AND JOEL
ALSO
P.H. COLLEY'S
NEW EROTIC NOVEL,
REDEMPTION FOR
THE SATYR
ADULTS ONLY

THE MEN OF SAMSON AND HOMAN MAGAZINES

PHOTO BY KAIMEI-KAN

CHIRON RISING AND *CR CLASSICS* MAGAZINES ARE CELEBRATIONS OF THE MATURE, SEASONED MAN IN ALL HIS MANY SIZES, COLORS AND SEXUAL ATTITUDES. OUR GOALS: TO PUBLISH THE FINEST ADULT ENTERTAINMENT OF INTEREST TO THE MATURE MAN AND HIS MANY ADMIRERS; TO PROVIDE OUR READERS WITH A CONTACT NETWORK THROUGH WHICH THEY MAY ENRICH THEIR LIVES WITH NEW FRIENDS, LIFEMATES AND A SENSE OF RENEWED DIGNITY AND BELONGING.

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PROFILES OF MODELS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

GREYBEARD is 67, retired and living in Atlanta with his partner. He enjoys cooking, working out, spectator sports and meeting new people--especially big, burly men over 40.

BOB THREE is a 51-year-old, 5'-8", 170# Virgo who lives in Colorado with his partner. Once a farm boy, he is now a communications research professional. Bob loves all men but prefers them over 35.

THOM, 70, is a semi-retired construction worker who has just recently joined photographer **JOEL** in the wilds of the great Northwest. Since their relationship is loving and open, THOM welcomes contacts by men such as himself, only under forty. Young JOEL, on the other hand, is anxious to meet rugged, mature men and especially wishes to find more models to immortalize in *CR* and *CR CLASSICS*.

SPUD is a retired professional who is 70, 5'-11", versatile, adaptable, clean, warm, honest, open, sincere, cultural and musical. He lives in Idaho with his roommate.

DADDY BEAR is a 60-year-old retired engineer who enjoys travel, bears and cubs. An expert cabinet maker, he lives near Atlanta where he enjoys an open relationship with model KIM.

MAX ANDRUS is a Southern California homeowner who finds himself recently singled after 25 years. He loves the outdoors and heavy-set bears.

THE NUDIST summers in New Jersey and winters in Florida. Obviously he enjoys nudism, but he also likes photography, penpals, watercolor painting and travelling. He's 56, 5'-9" and 175#.

HARRY is the other half of the dynamic duo, JOE & HARRY. This video and photography whiz lives in Tennessee, not far from JOE, who lives in Mississippi.

JACK, our cover model from Issue #47, lives in Central Florida and is looking for friends who want to visit Disney World and have lots of fun in other ways. JACK and his friend, Philip, look forward to hearing from new friends.

TRAVEL'N PARSON is 59, 6'-1", 190# and enjoys bicycling, outdoors, art, travel, humanitarianism and culture. He's interested in finding occasional travel companions.

(Continued on page 60)

REDEMPTION FOR THE SATYR

a novel by Patrick H. Colley

ONE

REPRIEVE

Hendersonville, North Carolina
Wednesday, April 18, 1984

My daughter rushed into the small hospital chapel, her two teenage sons close behind. She searched my eyes then glanced at her older brother sitting next to me.

"A drunk driver swerved into her lane," choked my 38-year-old son, Jeff, dressed as always in a dark suit and carrying his ever-present Bible.

Unbelieving, she looked at me. "Daddy?"

A swirl of diverse and alien emotions made me feel numb, perhaps a little drunk. I shrugged. "They say she's critical," I said haltingly. "Totaled the car. She wasn't wearing her seat belt." I didn't tell Melba that the emergency room doctor had given my wife only a slim chance to survive. Nor had I told Jeff, who showed up ten minutes after I called him at his church. "She's in surgery, so . . . " I cleared my throat and wondered if my voice was even audible. "All we can do is . . . wait it out." I gestured for her to sit in a chair across from me.

Melba slowly sat down, her face ashen. My grandsons backed into the hallway, obviously terrified by the possibility of their first family tragedy.

Ann and I had been together for nearly forty years, the first twenty spent in the service of the U.S. Navy. The early years of our marriage were like a romance novel, and our two "military brat" kids were good students who never got into trouble. Having retired as a chief warrant officer, I moved the family back to North Carolina and became a successful general contractor. My son became a Baptist minister, and my daughter married a man who would become a Baptist deacon and deputy mayor of Hendersonville. My wife and I were considered exceptional parents who went to church every Sunday—real pillars of society. I was regularly approached to run for public office (I never did), and Ann seemed to be involved with every charity in town. But what the people of Hendersonville didn't know was that this "perfect" family living in a spectacular house on Huckleberry Mountain had a dark secret.

I looked up at the doorway as a young doctor in surgical smock approached the room. At his side was a middle-aged woman with a name tag. Their grim expressions signalled bad news.

Melba and Jeff reached out for one another as the couple walked into the room and scanned our faces. My daughter began to cry.

The doctor nodded at me, then looked at Melba and Jeff. "Folks, I'm afraid we lost her." He looked back at me with a helpless expression as my son and daughter began to wail.

The woman went to them and tried to console them. I assumed it was her job.

Strangely, I could only wonder how often the doctor had to break such news and how he'd developed his technique. "What happened?" I asked calmly, focusing on my grandsons behind him in the hallway. They appeared dumbfounded.

The doctor seemed surprised at my lack of some predictable form of reaction. "Her lungs failed . . . her heart arrested three times . . . and then her aorta ruptured. There was . . . nothing . . . "

"You did the best you could, I'm sure," I said soothingly.

He nodded and left the room, glancing back at me once with a puzzled expression. I serenely watched as another female hospital employee entered, carrying a clipboard. I assumed that there had to be a signature and instructions on where to send the body.

That night, as hundreds of people lined up to pay their respects at the closed-casket wake, I stood entranced, shaking hand after hand. I could hear nothing of what was said to me. Eventually I excused myself and allowed Jeff to take over. I walked outside into the cool evening and wondered if Ann was as relieved as I.

Friday, April 20

As Ann's casket descended into the grave, Jeff and Melba clung to their respective spouses and children. No one touched me; I wondered if they could sense that I really didn't need their comfort. It was as if I wasn't there.

I tried to analyze my feelings but could detect only the subdued elation of a man who'd just had a life sentence commuted and was about to be set free in a strange world. I felt no sense of loss, no grief. Perhaps Melba and Jeff noticed my lack of mourning, and that was the reason why I was being ignored. But I didn't care.

Of course, they knew that Ann and I had been having marital problems, and they obviously blamed me for the estrangement. Ann always got the hugs and kisses, and I got the curt nod and a "Hiya, Dad." It all seemed pleasant enough, but now I was witnessing how they really felt about me.

Later that day, Jeff and Melba left their families at home and drove up to the house to claim the things they thought their mother wanted them to have. She'd not made out a will.

While Melba was in the attic looking through Ann's old photographs, Jeff and I sat at the kitchen table. I drank a double Scotch on the rocks while Jeff looked at the glass with contempt. I could feel tension in the air and knew that all of us had to get some things off our chests.

"Momma told me that she was going to divorce you," Jeff said softly. He looked at me solemnly. "But she wouldn't tell me why. I got the impression it was something pretty horrible to her."

I studied my pious son's expression for a moment, wondering how I would answer. I decided to be blunt. "I'm sixty-two now, Jeff. I'm healthy, active . . . . I've got a lot of life left in me. I have needs, son—sexual needs." I expected his face to turn crimson, and it did. "Your mother stopped having sex with me back in seventy-seven. She began sleeping by herself and refused to take care of me any more. Said that sex was for having babies and that she thought it was sinful to have sex for pleasure. If I'm not mistaken, you're the one who put that wonderful idea into her head." My son's nod of agreement didn't surprise me. "Well, I went without for about a year, then I figured

that it wasn't fair. So I started having affairs."

Jeff shook his head in shame. "How could you?"

His reaction sickened me, and I had to bite my tongue. The rumors of Jeff's affair with his secretary were all over town. "She finally found out about three months ago. I reckon that's about the time she told you about divorcing me."

He nodded, unable to look at my face. "Who with?"

I chuckled. "Why, it's none of your business, Jeff. Simple as that."

Melba came down the attic stairs.

Jeff looked away, sulking.

I envisioned the little boy that I had adored, the one who wanted to emulate and please his father so much. I remembered the fishing and camping trips, the adolescent crises I helped him through. Oddly, I vividly remembered his panic when he had his first climax during a wet dream and how I'd explained puberty to him.

But he began to change and, like his sister, mirror the more intolerable qualities of his mother. By the time he'd finished high school, he was immersed in the church and was definitely his mother's son. He began to avoid me because of my rather coarse construction worker language.

Melba slowly walked into the kitchen with a manila envelope in her hands and sat on the opposite side of the table from me. She had a revolted look on her face.

"You look like you just stepped in dog shit," I blurted.

Jeff ignored my remark and looked in alarm at his sister. "What is it?"

Melba pulled out a familiar-looking letter and cleared her throat. She began to read: "Dear Barney . . . " She glanced warily at Jeff. "I saw your ad in *Mature Men* Magazine and just had to write . . . . "

I felt like I had just been sucked into a whirlpool, yet somehow I felt an overwhelming sense of relief. For the first time in my life, I admitted to myself that I really didn't care about what my family thought of me. Perhaps I didn't even love them any more. I looked at my son and daughter and saw nothing of myself in them. They were alien to me.

Melba continued with a tremulous voice. "Five-seven, a hundred eighty, wiry, muscular, grey/bald, blue-green eyes and hung?" She swallowed with difficulty and continued haltingly. "W . . . Wow! When is the next flight to Asheville, North Carolina? Man, you are just my type. I just hope you're not married. Are you? I live in Columbus, Ohio, and . . ."

I regained control of my body and tore the letter and envelope out of Melba's hands. "Where did you find this?"

"In Momma's things upstairs." She sounded cold, hateful.

I remembered receiving a Columbus letter at my secret post office box in Asheville. Somewhere along the way, I'd lost it, and Ann must have found it in the car.

"Jeff, you want to know who signed the letter?" Her lips formed a self-righteous smile.

Jeff looked at her, then at me. He nodded.

"Robert Saxon."

"A man?" Jeff's mouth fell open. He blinked as if someone had swung at him too fast for a reaction.

Jeff and Melba abruptly got up and collected all the things they could pack into their cars. Cramming their trunks and back seats full, they came back inside for a final load.

Melba looked at me hatefully, defiantly. "I don't want you around my children ever again. Do you understand?"

Jeff cleared his throat, drawing my attention.

"The same for mine," he said with perhaps a little ambivalence.

Devastated, I watched as they gathered up all they could carry and took it out to their cars. They tearfully hugged one another and got into their respective vehicles.

I walked out on the huge redwood terrace I had built only the previous summer and watched as their cars disappeared down the winding mountain road. I sat down in an old-fashioned porch swing and tried to anticipate what else my son and daughter would do. Knowing that they would make life miserable for me, I made the decision to leave it all behind. There was no going back to what I was before.

Having had two near-disastrous affairs with women after Ann cut off our sex, I'd almost decided that I would be better off becoming celibate. I found myself fantasizing about kinky sex and began to frequent adult book stores along the highways. One summer day in 1980, I felt desperate and vowed to have sex with the first available orifice. I was reading a copy of a transvestite magazine in one of the roadside porn shops and realized that a middle-aged man was licking his lips while staring at my stretched trousers. When he nodded toward the door and walked outside, I reluctantly followed, hoping that he would quickly get me off in the back of a van or something. Instead, he drove me to his mobile home less than a mile away and spent two hours voraciously draining my prostate. It brought back memories of two similar encounters in the Pacific during World War II. They were memories that I had completely forgotten . . . or suppressed.

I never found out his name (he was married, too), but I never forgot the excitement of that afternoon, or how he changed my life by introducing me to *Mature Men*. Through the magazine's contact network, I corresponded extensively and found it amazing that so many men of all ages liked older guys like me.

And as I gently swung, I found it incredible that such a publication could finalize the alienation from my children and grandchildren, yet at the same time instill in me a sense of renewed hope that I would meet someone to love.

Monday, May 14

I'd had a standing offer to sell my company to an outfit called Blake-Grimaldi Constructors out of Charlotte. They were industrial contractors who were buying up smaller companies like mine and diversifying all over western North Carolina. It seemed so strange to see my company change hands so fast. Their lawyers talked to mine, papers were signed, and someone said, "Done deal." Since I wasn't incorporated and all of my equipment was paid for, it turned out to be pretty simple. They gave me a check for 2.3 million, and I turned it over to my Asheville investment banker/CPA friend, who vowed to keep Uncle Sam's share to a minimum. It was indeed a "done deal."

Wednesday, May 23

A realtor friend brought over a young, well-heeled couple from New Jersey to see the house, which I'd quietly put up for sale with an asking price of $300,000. They loved it and made an offer of $265,000 with a thirty-day escrow. To my realtor friend's consternation, I accepted the offer. It could have been fifteen days and $200,000 for all I cared.

I drove to Asheville and traded in my 1982 Cadillac on a luxuriously customized '84 Ford van, complete with a double bed, air conditioner, refrigerator, stove and porta-potty. When I returned, I visited my agnostic attorney and instructed him to

combine the proceeds from the house with Ann's $100,000 life insurance policy and set up a trust fund for the college education of my five grandchildren. Neither Jeff nor Melba were to receive a dime. In addition, I had him draw up a new will which disinherited my daughter and son and named as my beneficiary *Mature Men* Magazine.

Thursday, May 24

I left Hendersonville that fog-shrouded morning bound for Florida. I could smell spring in the air and knew that it was a good sign.

Having chosen four men to meet from the thirty-odd men with whom I'd corresponded, I headed for Orlando to meet the first one on the list.

Saturday, May 26

From his letters and photos, Jim seemed to be the most promising, but he proved to be very disappointing. He was about thirty and very handsome, but he drank too much. He also had trouble taking my fairly large cock in his mouth and insisted upon anal sex, something I had no taste for. When I announced that I would be leaving prematurely, he became offensive and vicious. Aware of my own fragile flash point, I quickly left and headed for my second destination, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Monday, May 28

George turned out to be a witty, warm and attractive 55. He was very much turned on to me physically and kept commenting about my eyes, grey fringe, still-muscular body and seven inch cock. Eventually he admitted that the most attractive thing about me was my "mean" look. Shortly thereafter, he began to strongly hint that he wanted me to get rough with him. Later on that night, I gamely slapped his buttocks and, after much cajoling, his face, but became completely turned off when he unlocked his play room filled with slings, chains, whips and six brands of poppers.

I left and checked into a motel. *Two down and only two more to go*, I thought, regretting that I'd not written to more people.

TWO

THE STANDARD

Tuesday, May 29

I checked out of the motel at the crack of dawn and decided to get down the road before having breakfast. Ominous-looking thunderstorms were approaching and I needed gas, so I got off Interstate 10 at one of the Lafayette exits and pulled up next to a self-serve pump at a Mobil station. While I filled my tank, I watched as a short, burly man with salt-and-pepper hair filled the tank of an elderly couple at the full service pumps. The name "Charlie" was embroidered over his left shirt pocket. I was enchanted by his brilliant smile and friendly eyes, which looked green from where I was. Then I saw his formidable basket, which sent a shudder through me.

Filling my tank, I walked into the station to pay with a Mobil credit card and was disappointed when a young mechanic checked me out. I looked above the cash register at a sign which read, "Charlie Guidry's Mobil Service." "You Charlie?" I nodded toward the sign.

He smiled. "Naw, that's m' uncle." He looked at the burly man outside. "That's Charlie. He owns the place."

I glanced hungrily at Charlie as he checked under the hood of the elderly couple's car. "Guidry, huh?"

"Yeah. Lots of Guidrys in Cajun country." He handed me my receipt. "Come back now."

I walked out and put the receipt and credit card in my wallet. Hearing a car hood slam, I looked up just as Charlie was walking my way. Instinctively, I looked at his crotch again and felt my face numbing.

"Come back now," said Charlie with a thick Cajun accent.

I looked into his exquisite green eyes and felt a glow as I was drawn to his brilliant smile.

"I will," I said absently, trembling as I walked to my van and began cleaning my windshield. I watched him as he talked with his nephew. "Oh, I'll be back, all right," I mumbled to myself. "When I learn how to handle someone as awesome as you . . . I'll be back."

Only the edge of the storm hit us, but it was enough to bring a couple of bolts of lightning harrowingly close. As the rain poured, I sat inside my van and looked at Charlie's distorted form. I wanted to suck his cock, and the realization sent shock waves through me. I'd fallen for the big lie that men were either completely gay or straight with no middle ground and that all bisexuals were liars. I was led to believe that sucking a cock would somehow infect me and make me like the obviously gay men who boldly propositioned me at the rest stops and book stores back in North Carolina. It wasn't until I was introduced to *Mature Men* Magazine that I began to understand the complexities of male-to-male sex and love.

I drove to a McDonald's down the street and had an Egg McMuffin and a cup of coffee. I couldn't get Charlie out of my mind and wondered why I was so profoundly attracted to him. And then I remembered reading an article in *Mature Men* about how male sexuality is so misunderstood. The writer insisted that, given the right timing and conditions, many adventurous "heterosexual" men could be lured into some degree of experimental sex with another man. He maintained that the vast majority of men didn't really have a sealed-in-concrete sexual orientation. Instead, he insisted, the "average" male was intrinsically bisexual, but because of factors such as social mores, religious condemnation and the AIDS epidemic, most men felt compelled to repress their true natures. He also believed that an unusually powerful sexual attraction to another man was usually a signal that the chemical reaction was mutual to some extent. He warned, however, that many sexually suppressed men could compulsively react with hostility toward a man who sexually attracted them, especially if that man made a pass. The memory of the article only fueled my passion for Charlie or someone like him. I decided then that I wasn't about to settle for less than what I really wanted: a Charlie Guidry type of guy.

As the sky began to clear, I got back on the freeway and headed for Houston. In the rear view mirror, I saw a brilliant rainbow between Lafayette and Breaux Bridge, that oddly named town I had passed earlier. I wondered if the rainbow held any significance for me.

"Charlie Guidry!" I said, feeling vibrant inside. "If I don't find what I'm looking for out west, I'm coming back for you, my

man."

I pressed on for Houston.

Arriving around noon, I bought a map at a service station, checked into a motel, grabbed a telephone directory and set out to explore the city's adult bookstores and arcades, which I'd heard were abundant.

I visited six stores, all of which were busy with a younger clientele. I received nary a glimpse from any of the patrons, but found that someone was always willing to go down on me when I pushed my cock through one of the holes. I tried three holes before finding a proficient cocksucker, then I patiently allowed the man to get me off as I fantasized sucking Charlie Guidry's cock.

As I cleaned my penis with a handkerchief, it occurred to me that a simple release was no longer enough. The anonymity wasn't appealing. I wanted to know who was on the other side. I wanted him to be masculine and rugged, like Charlie, and I wanted the option to reciprocate.

On the south side of Houston, just off the Gulf Freeway, I found perhaps the largest of all the "sex palaces." Every parking spot was taken, and no one was leaving. I decided to come back the following morning after the place opened at ten. I wanted to find out why this arcade was so special. After all, I was about a week ahead of schedule, and the pen-pal in Tucson wouldn't be available for several more days.

Back at the motel, I ordered dinner from room service and drank a double Scotch while waiting. I wondered where I was headed. On the one hand, I was excited about being so free, but on the other, I felt afraid of becoming like the men in Orlando and Baton Rouge. Worse, I had no idea where I would go if the men in Tucson and Phoenix turned out the same way. I'd been so confident that one of the four choices would lead to something.

As the alcohol did its work, a dark, negative cloud seemed to hover over me. I drifted off to sleep after dinner while envisioning my van making its way up the California coast. No destination. No company except a bottle of Scotch.

THREE

THE OBSESSION

Wednesday, May 30

On the television news that morning, there was talk of an annular eclipse; I wondered if it portended anything exciting.

I arrived at the large arcade just after ten and found only three cars parked in the lot. I almost drove to another place, but I felt curious about what kind of person would cruise for sex that early. "Probably just employees," I said to myself.

Inside there was a large front room with an impressive display of videos, magazines and paperback books. An acne-scarred young man sat glassy-eyed behind an elevated counter. No one else was visible, so I assumed that at least two customers were in the adjacent arcade.

I bought five dollars worth of tokens and walked through a doorway into a dark labyrinth of hallways and numbered doors. Moving into complete darkness, I stopped and leaned against a booth, listening for the sounds of the other two customers.

As my eyes adjusted, I spotted a tiny red light atop a door several rows down and faintly heard the flickering sound of a projector. Moving in that direction, I caught a glimpse of someone entering a booth to my left. I stopped and monitored both the light and the area where I saw the movement. As my eyesight improved more, a man came out of the dark booth and walked toward me. As he passed by, I could see that he was burly yet distinguished looking, about 35, and dressed in a dark suit. I felt a surprisingly intense attraction to him. The feeling was identical to that felt when I first saw Charlie in Lafayette. Thinking about the *Mature Men* article about mutual chemical reactions, I decided to be aggressive.

I followed him as he walked slowly down the pungently dank main aisle. When he reached the back of the building, he turned the corner, and I rushed to catch up. Around the corner, I looked for him in the dimness, but there was no one in sight. To my left were soft drink machines and a toilet. To my right were eight more booths, all with darkened lights. Knowing that he hadn't had time to reach the other corner or the toilet, I stood there, waiting.

A token dropped through a slot, and the light above the booth nearest me came on. Relieved, I went into the adjacent booth and saw that there was a hole. Wondering what I would do if he pushed his cock through, I closed and locked the door and carefully knelt before the hole. He just stood there, his hands to his sides. I lowered myself further in order to see his face. His expression was stoic as he watched the porn flick projected on the back of the door. I looked at what he was watching and found that it was a scene of two men doing a sixty-nine. Again I looked at his face and thought I could see a darting glance at my eye through the hole.

The projector suddenly stopped; for what seemed like a full minute or two, he didn't make a sound, nor did I. Then I heard his wing-tip shoes shuffle across the cum-saturated floor, followed by the sound of another token being pushed through the slot. Again the room illuminated, but this time he had his cock out, stroking it. It was of medium length but very thick, and I found myself wanting it.

The thought of sucking his cock scared me witless, but my desire for him was potent. I thought of how men had sucked mine and seemed to relish the taste of my semen. It was as if they were addicted to the substance, and I wondered if I would become addicted, doomed to a continual search for yet another "fix."

But he never pushed his cock through. He just stood there, stroking it, looking down at my eye as if he wanted to tease me. I gave him the universal "stick-it-through" sign by flashing my index finger through the hole, but he only turned slightly, affording me a better view. Determined to take my first cock, I flashed my finger again and looked hungrily at the glistening piece of flesh, willing it to come forward. With pounding heart and sweaty palms I flashed two fingers, then three, scratching the opening to make sure that he saw my signal.

He moved closer and began masturbating in earnest. Again I looked up at his face and found him smiling. It was a ritual with him! Did he want me to drool and beg? *Okay, I will.* "Give it to me," I whispered urgently. "Stick it through."

He moved closer still, and I could smell his maleness. It was the nearest my face had ever been to a penis, and I was prepared to go all the way. I not only wanted to suck this man's cock; I wanted to take his load and swallow it, too. I took out my own turgid cock and fondled it.

The light went off again, but this time he quickly zipped up and left the booth. Frantically I stuffed my penis back inside

my trousers and fumbled with my zipper, which became temporarily stuck. By the time I got out of the booth, he was nowhere in sight. I stopped and listened, but there was only the sound of the projector near the entrance.

I walked around the complete square of the main aisle, opening every door and looking inside each cubicle. Assuming that he had left, I leaned against the wall next to the soft drink machine and tried to gather my wits. I was shaking from a combination of fear and lust. And then I heard a commode flush and saw him leaving the toilet. He walked past me and smiled, leaving me dumbfounded.

He walked toward the exit but abruptly turned into a side aisle with four cubicles. I rushed to the aisle and watched as a light came on above the third booth. I tried to open the door of the second, but it was locked. A light suddenly came on above that door. I searched the vacant fourth booth, but there was no hole. I moved to the vacant first booth and found a large diameter hole. Squatting, I came face-to-face with a long slender finger, beckoning me to push my cock through. Backing away, I waited for the finger to disappear, then looked through the hole again. Standing in the middle of the cubicle was a tall, slender man who was now offering his cock to the holes on either side. Then I saw the faint image of the burly man's eye, staring through the opposite hole.

The eye soon disappeared and was replaced by the familiar, thick cock, which sent the thin man to his knees in glee.

"No!" I shouted, astounded that I had done so.

The thin man looked back at me in amazement, then started sucking the cock I had chosen to take my virginity. I looked on in horror as the thin man slurped, moaned and clawed at the wall. The burly man's thrusts became forceful, causing the thin man to gag and choke. The wall cracked as the burly man pounded into it one last time, grunting as he released his load.

The thin man fell backwards and spat the jissom onto the floor, allowing me full view of the moist fat cock, still discharging in spasms.

A surge of panic gripped me, and I rushed out to my van. Gripping the steering wheel, I shook violently. "Lordy, what's happened to me? I wanted that so badly. Why did I want him so badly?"

The burly man came out of the building seconds later and strode, red-faced, toward a maroon Buick Electra. Unable to stop myself, I got out of the van and approached him.

"Howdy," I said, sticking my shaking hands inside my pockets.

He got inside his car and regarded me with fear and suspicion.

"Uhh," I stammered. "I hope you don't think I'm crazy, but . . . "

"What do you want, buddy?" the man snapped, his voice cold, acidic.

I sighed and shrugged, unable to look him in the face. "I guess I just wanted to tell you . . . that . . . that . . . "

He started his car.

"Hey, don't drive off," I said, feeling like a fool. "I've never met anyone like you. I want to know you. I *have* to know you."

The man stared at me in amazement. "Hey, look, I already got my rocks off."

"I'm staying at a motel over on . . . "

The car began to move.

"Please, just let me hop inside and taste it. Just five seconds."

The man shook his head with disgust and drove away.

"Can we meet later?" I yelled after him, embarrassed and forlorn over what had come over me, yet alert enough to remember the license number: PNB 017.

I watched as his car disappeared down the freeway service road.

I drove aimlessly, trying to comprehend why I had done such a bizarre thing. I seriously considered the possibility that I was going insane. Heading back toward the motel, I stopped at a liquor store and bought a liter of gin, something I'd not consumed in over twenty years.

Saturday, June 2

Hoping that the man in the Electra would return, I'd parked in the arcade parking lot between ten and eleven the previous two mornings. Several times I spotted someone attractive enough to follow inside, but I kept my vigil. It occurred to me that perhaps he might visit the place in the afternoons, so I began driving by at odd afternoon hours, looking for the Electra. Of course, I realized that perhaps he was one of those guys who only had sex with men once every few months or so—that is, the time it would take to get over the guilt feelings. I vaguely remembered seeing a wedding band on his finger.

I debated whether or not to get back on the road and kill a week getting to Tucson. I was smart enough to realize that I was growing obsessed, and the sobering reality of that *truly* frightened me. A little voice told me to move on, that there were cities such as San Antonio and El Paso to discover.

But by the time I'd packed my suitcase, I realized that there must be others in Houston like "Mr. Electra." Surely there was someone out there just as good and a lot more available. With that comforting thought, I set out that afternoon to see what the action was like on weekends.

I pulled into the parking lot of the large arcade and saw a maroon Electra parked near the back. The license number was PNB 017. "No," I said to myself. "Go to another one. Stay away from him." But my admonishments went unheeded. I drove through the parking lot looking for a space, but found none. Then the obsession gripped me again, and I parked at the very back in a no-parking zone.

I quickly made my way inside, bought tokens, and rushed into the maze, now clogged with younger gay men—all stalking or being stalked. I made the circle at least five times and passed at least fifty men, but there was no sign of the burly man. I even compensated for the fact that he was probably not wearing a business suit and could be wearing a T-shirt and ball cap instead. Then I noticed that a red light had remained on for quite a while over a "straight action" video booth which I'd previously found to be smaller than the projector cubicles and void of holes. Knowing that it had to be Mr. Electra, I stood a few feet away and waited.

Eventually the action subsided and the place cleared out somewhat, but I stayed in the shadows with my gaze locked on the door. Several times the light went off, and my heart raced in anticipation of his coming out—only to resume normal rhythm as another token dropped into the slot.

A throbbing pain from my bladder soon got my attention, and I realized that I had to urinate—that I'd been putting it off for almost thirty minutes. I rushed to the toilet and back but found the booth vacant.

Enraged, I quickly walked around the main hallway and found the place almost deserted. I peered through every

hole, but he wasn't in any of the booths. Then I noticed a light above one of the rarely used larger booths which had no holes. *He's jacking off*, I thought. *Shit*. The light went out, and he came out of the booth, dressed in a sport shirt and snug jeans. The sight of him made me tremble with obsessive lust.

Not noticing me, he ambled toward the maze as if he wasn't quite ready to leave.

Holding back so as not to be noticed, I followed him, determined not to miss out again. Then a young man came from the shadows and got between us, infuriating me. I watched helplessly as the burly man turned and glanced at the young man, then walked into a booth. The young man, no doubt assuming that I was no threat, took his time walking into the adjacent booth—enough time, as a matter of fact, for me to cut him off and enter the booth in front of him.

"Asshole," the young man said softly, walking away.

I turned and looked passionately at the hole. Kneeling before the opening, I watched as a flickering movie lit up the next booth and the object of my affection slowly pulled out his hard, drooling cock. With two large hands, he scooped out two formidable testicles and squeezed them. He was obviously putting on a show for what he assumed was the young man.

The impressive balls and cock loomed before me, luring my shaking finger through the hole. He inched closer to the hole as his genitals glistened from the strobe-like reflection of the porno movie. As the swollen head reached the hole, I felt like a man about to dive from a cliff into uncharted waters.

I opened my mouth and welcomed the organ into my virgin mouth. A rush of euphoria swept over me, suppressing my gag mechanism and dilating my throat, which enveloped the pulsing cock. The smell of the man's pubic hair and the salty taste of his skin excited me to the point that I was afraid I would climax in my pants. Then a dollop of precum rolled over my taste buds, altering me instantly. I was then ready to take his load, to savor it and swallow it.

Suddenly the man's door flew open, and the young man that I'd cut off pulled the burly man away from me, urging him into a sitting position. The young man glanced at me with contempt, then went down on the thick cock. As I slowly sat back on the filthy concrete floor, bitter tears filled my eyes.

Unable to watch my prize being devoured by someone else, I struggled to my feet and slipped out of the cubicle. I stood against the wall across from the invaded booth and painfully listened to the escalating grunts. There was an urgent moan, then silence, then a spitting sound.

"What a waste," I whispered to myself. "I would have consumed you like a fine cognac. I would have enveloped your sweet penis and patiently awaited that last drop of your . . . your delicious elixir." *Oh, Lordy, how I hurt!*

I heard the young man whispering and chuckling. *About me, perhaps?*

The door creaked open and the young man came out. Recognizing me, he walked past and stuck his middle finger in my face. "Eat shit and die, Gramps."

I took a quick step forward and blind-sided him with a right cross, sending him sprawling into a vacant booth. Calmly, I walked into the booth and checked his pulse. As he began to regain consciousness, I quickly left. Just as I reached the front entrance, I heard the young man scream, so I assumed that the police would be called.

Rushing to my van, I got in and drove out of the parking lot just in time to see the burly man rushing to the Electra. As I waited for the Buick to drive by, I suddenly felt ill over what I had done.

I followed the maroon car for well over thirty minutes and assumed that I was somewhere on the southwest side of Houston. Several times I'd almost vomited as my mind drifted back to the violence. Remorse had mixed with the soup of emotions that began to flow through me. There was a growing fear that I was losing control of my will; a panic attack seemed to be imminent, and I took several deep breaths.

The Electra finally exited the freeway and I followed, maintaining a four-car distance through heavy congestion. I could see that a light up ahead was short-cycling, so I knew that it would be difficult to keep up.

The Buick made it through the light just as it changed. I watched sadly as the car barely made it through the next light and sped on even further. It occurred to me that the man would probably cool his arcade escapades for awhile in light of the violence. Losing sight of him now would mean losing him forever. That realization sent me slumping into my seat.

I squinted, trying to pick out something maroon, but there was only a blur. I got through the intersection during the next cycle and continued in the same direction. Passing three more lights and an entire shopping center, I assumed that the chase was over and felt a sense of relief from some tiny area of my brain. The area of reason, I assumed.

At the next corner I spotted a Mobil station and looked at my gauge, which registered near empty. As I pulled up next to a pump, my attention was directed to a maroon car at a Shell station across the street. "I don't believe it," I whispered. "Maybe it was meant to be after all." I watched as the man placed the nozzle back into the pump and gave his credit card to an attendant.

Anticipating the timing of the transaction and the man's movements, I skipped getting gas and pulled out onto the same street just as the light changed to red. Sure enough, the Buick pulled out onto the same street going the same direction as before. When the light changed, there were two cars between us. "You're mine," I whispered. "And if I run out of gas, I'll chase you on foot!"

The Buick turned into a residential area and eventually pulled into a driveway on a quiet street lined with upscale houses. I drove past and pulled up at the curb just under a block away. Adjusting my rear-view mirror, I watched him as he got out of his car and glanced in my direction. Pulling out a set of keys, he stuck one in the front door lock and held it there. Slowly, he turned his head and looked at my van for several seconds.

"It's me," I said. "And you're mine."

Monday, June 4

My anxiety deepened. I felt totally helpless and unable to break the spell of the obsession. I sat inside the rental car, watching the house through a light, steady rain. I wondered how far I could get if I suddenly broke the spell and immediately left for Tucson. Visions of saguaros and coyotes and deserts filled my head, only to quickly disperse as a well-dressed woman carrying an umbrella rushed from the house to the maroon car. Pulling out of the driveway, she drove past me, paying me no mind.

"Oh how I'd love to be there right now, watching you shower and shave," I mumbled. "I'd suck that big dick while you shaved and make you moan twice as loud as . . . "

The garage door groaned open, and a silver Skyhawk backed out. It had a large black "B" on the rear bumper. As the

garage door closed, the car sped off in the opposite direction the Electra had taken. After it was around the corner, I started the rental car and followed the Skyhawk to an office building parking lot behind the Galleria Shopping Center. I pulled into the lot behind him and parked several feet away. As I watched him walk toward a back entrance to the building, I looked up for the name of a company, but there was no identification.

I waited ten minutes, then walked into the front entrance. Seeing a receptionist in the center of the foyer, I approached her.

"Uh . . . " I stammered. "Maybe I have the wrong building." I glanced around the lobby for a directory. "Where's your directory?"

"Blackburn Construction leases this building, sir," said the receptionist with a thick Texas drawl. "We're all Blackburn here."

"Oh," I said, delighted that I had so easily found out where he worked and lived. "I *do* have the wrong building."

I went back to the car and sat inside, watching the Skyhawk, memorizing its plates.

So, he works for Blackburn, huh? Big international constructor. Everyone probably knows the decal on his bumper, so he takes his wife's car to cruise. Smart. Wears expensive suits. Not a draftsman, that's for sure. Not an engineer, 'cause those guys just don't dress like that. Probably a manager. Who are you, my sweet obsession?

At ten o'clock, he rushed to his car and drove away.

I followed him on two freeways until he exited and pulled into another office building parking lot on the north side of the city. As I waited inside my car, he went inside the building, returning just under fifteen minutes later.

I watched as he took off his coat and tie and threw them into the back seat. Driving off again, he led me to a small shopping center just blocks away. I wasn't surprised to see him park in front of a jewelry shop and walk the entire length of the shopping center to a small adult arcade at the end.

"You sly dog," I said, parking in front of the arcade. "Horny again, huh?"

A drug store sign caught my eye and a bizarre idea barged into my head. It nauseated me, but I knew that I had to feed my obsession. I went inside the store and bought a small, cheap flash camera. Without buying film, I placed the camera inside my back pocket and entered the arcade.

Making sure that he wasn't in the magazine and video section, I purchased tokens and was buzzed inside the darkened arcade.

I slowly prowled the main hallway but could only make out a Coke machine at the back. The silhouette of a thin man smoking a cigarette came into my view as I passed him by. As I neared the soft drink machine, I heard the flickering sound of a projector and saw a light above a booth at the end of another hallway. I walked to the booth and saw two young men lurking in the shadows nearby. It appeared that Mr. Blackburn Manager had caused a stir and had already connected with someone.

Finding the adjacent booth empty, I walked inside and closed the door. I felt for holes but found none, which explained why the two guys outside weren't inside watching the action next door. Carefully climbing atop a bench, I peered over the wall and found the burly man, his pants down to his ankles, leaning against the wall and watching the movie as a young black man sucked his cock.

I took a deep breath and held the camera up over the wall. My objective mind seemed to implore me not to go through with it, and for a moment I almost backed down. But my obsession was now in complete swing and my finger pressed down.

The flash of light no doubt stunned everyone in the maze, so no one noticed as I stuffed the camera in my back pocket and quietly left. As I reached the cashier, I heard frantic movements and yelling.

"Who took that fuckin' picture?!" came a booming, enraged voice.

I looked up at the cashier. "Some creep is taking flash pictures in there."

As the attendant rushed into the maze, I grinned and calmly walked to the car.

FOUR

BLACKMAIL

Tuesday, June 5

I was petrified as I parked my van in the Blackburn parking lot. Arriving before seven, I slipped down in the seat as the employees began to arrive. At a quarter before eight the silver Skyhawk arrived with its stone-face driver and parked a row away. I watched with trepidation as he glanced my way and strode for the building entrance. At the entrance, he suddenly stopped and turned, staring at the van in disbelief. The color seemed to drain from his face, and he slowly continued inside.

He appeared at an upper window, looking down at me. I took a deep breath and wiped the clamminess from my hands. Trembling from fear, I stepped out of the van and placed a prepared note under the Buick's windshield wiper. Glancing up at the immobile figure, I got inside the van and drove off.

The note said:

"I have no idea why I'm doing this, but I really must have something from you. And this is the only way I can get it. I've watched you for several days, and you have affected me like no other. All I want is a couple of hours out of your life. I want to have you at will, and I want you to be receptive to me and treat me with warmth and kindness. I don't wish for you to do anything more than what I've seen you do with three other men. In return for this, I will direct you to the only photo and negative of that rather revealing shot. I have taken every precaution, so I recommend that you grin and bear it and put on the best act you can. Take tomorrow morning off and meet me at the Sunset Motel at West Loop and Richmond—Room 115— at 8:00 a.m."

By ten o'clock that night, I began to feel confident that he hadn't turned me in to the police. Later, in the darkness, I stared at the ceiling, chillingly anxious about what I'd done, yet terrified over the prospects of doing nothing and ultimately dying alone and unloved.

I dreamt that I was a coyote sitting atop a ridge, looking down at my van. The van was parked on a dry lake bed in the middle of a desert. Perhaps it was Death Valley. It was so very hot. A single popping sound came from the van. It was such a lonely, final sound. I trotted down to the lake bed and cautiously approached the van. Smelling the distinctive odor of blood, I sniffed at the open sliding door and peered inside. Ab older version of me lay on the floor, his head in the center of a growing pool of blood. A .38 revolver had bounced off the floor and landed in the sand outside. A gust of wind blew a piece of paper off a table, and it landed in the pool of blood. It said simply:

"Here lies an unloved man."

Wednesday, June 6

At 6:45, I awakened after having slept just a little over two hours. My nerves in a frazzle, I showered, shaved and brushed my teeth, then I dressed and sat quietly at a table near the front window.

At 8:11, the maroon Electra pulled up in front of the room. The handsome, burly man stared at me stoically then cautiously got out of the car and looked warily around the parking area. He walked stiffly to the door, which was ajar. Slowly pushing it open, he glanced at me, then carefully looked around the room.

"I'm the only one here," I croaked with a dry throat. My extremities seemed to be freezing, and I wondered if my heart was malfunctioning. "Have a seat." I nodded toward the other chair at the table.

He looked at me with a combination of fear, hatred and curiosity, then closed the door. "Who are you?" His voice was low and menacing.

"Barney. You?"

"Jerry." He slowly sat down. "You seem to know everything else. Why didn't you know that?" His deep blue eyes were cold and hate-filled.

I shrugged. "I don't know that much. Nice to meet you, Jerry."

"Look . . . " he said impatiently. "Could we get this thing over with?"

I studied him and sensed the loathing and danger, which excited me and scared me at the same time. "Sure," I said pleasantly.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked.

"Strip and lie on the bed," I directed rather self-consciously. I got up and closed the drapes.

Jerry slowly undressed and lay on the bed, staring up at the ceiling. I stood over him and looked in awe over his magnificent, coiled body. Undressing, I watched his eyes sweep the ceiling for a comfortable spot to focus on. He was tuning me out.

When I was nude, I moved closer to him, prompting him to close his eyes. I scanned his stocky, richly hued body, especially relishing the impressive, symmetrical balls and heavy, flaccid penis. He had silky, auburn hair on his body; his skin appeared soft and supple.

I descended upon him and lightly kissed each thigh, then each breast. I took a deep breath and exhaled hot air into his pubic hair. The soft cock rose and fell but didn't become erect.

I placed my tongue on his stomach and began licking my way up to his neck, whereupon I noticed his eyes moving rapidly underneath their lids.

"Why are you doing this?" he asked in anguish.

I licked his right nipple then leaned back on my knees. "I haven't the slightest idea. I can't get you out of my mind. I've never *ever* done anything *remotely* like this before."

"You know how serious blackmail is?"

I thought about the question and shrugged. "Yeah." I licked the other nipple and leaned back again. "You know how serious fucking in public is?"

He glanced at me, then closed his eyes again.

"I saw a vice cop suck off a well-heeled businessman like you once in a park in Asheville." I fondled his balls. "Afterwards, the cop arrested the man on a morals charge. The fella had four kids and a vice presidency at some foundry."

Jerry looked at me again.

"When you pull your dick out in public, you risk getting arrested, even though you're the suckee."

"What's your point?" He squinted at me.

I looked down at his still-flaccid cock. "You know the risks, yet you still do it, right?"

He didn't acknowledge.

"Well," I continued, "it's because you *have to*, isn't it? Church says it's wrong, the law does, too, and your parents would shit if they knew—let alone your wife. Everybody tells you it's wrong. Still, you do it because something dies inside if you don't. It's like a nutrient your body demands." I rubbed his nipples with my cold fingers. "And that's why I'm doing this. It's because I won't make it if I don't."

Jerry closed his eyes again as I sucked his cock in earnest, only to stop a few minutes later after his penis had still not reached erection. I sighed and sat in a chair.

"You're not surprised, are you?" asked Jerry, placing his arms behind his head. "You're the first cock . . . gay man I've ever said boo to . . . "

"It's okay to call me a cocksucker, now that you got my cherry. I don't think *gay* fits me too well, though."

"Whatever . . . . All the times I got blown in the arcades, I could watch the movies and not have to think about who was sucking my dick. I didn't have to talk to them." He stared at me with contempt. "But they weren't blackmailing me. The whole thing turns me off and *that's* why my cock won't get hard."

I nodded slowly. "I guess it's just as well. Maybe what I've done so far will sooth the beast. If I'd had you, it would've been like eating Chinese food, because I'd've been hungry for you again and again." I pulled my feet up into the chair. "Even if you *got* a hard-on, all you can give me is a mouthful of cum and your contempt. And I wouldn't have been satisfied without a little bit of *you*. A little bit of love, if you will." I got up and started dressing.

"So what now?" he asked, a look of tentative relief crossing his face.

"You can go," I mumbled dejectedly on my way to the bathroom. I began to urinate.

"Just like that?"

"Just like that."

"What about the photo?" He sat up in bed, shaking his head in confusion.

I finished and flushed the commode, then walked to my suitcase and pulled out the small camera. I pitched it to him. "One flash missing and there's no film. Never was any." I began to comb my hair in front of the dresser.

"You mean . . .?" His voice slightly quavered. "You mean that this was all a fucking *joke*?" He slowly got out of the bed, his body tensing.

I turned to face him. "I think it's best that you just leave, Jerry. I'm remorseful that it happened, but no real harm was done . . . except to maybe myself."

Jerry's face turned crimson and he lunged at me, grazing my neck with his fist. "You fucking cocksucker!" he yelled.

"Goddammit, Jerry, calm down!" I yelled back, holding up my arms defensively.

Jerry began swinging wildly, battering my arms. "Motherfucking cocksucker!"

As I had done so many times in my rather violent adulthood, spanning World War II through a long career at the mean end of the construction industry, I sent Jerry to his knees

with a jab to his right cheek.

"You asked for it," I mumbled, pulling him up on the bed. I walked to the door and looked outside to see if someone was close enough to have heard. The closest maid's cart was at the end of the wing, and there were no cars parked nearby. I went out to the van and pulled out a roll of electrical tape and a section of soft rope from an overhead storage compartment. Back in the room, I tied Jerry's ankles and wrists to the bed frame and taped his mouth shut.

A short time later, his eyes opened in panic.

"I'll take off the tape if you'll promise not to cause a commotion," I assured him.

He savagely fought against the ropes, screaming muted, incoherent threats. But he quickly tired and seemed to realize that struggling was futile. He began to weep in total frustration.

"You want to talk rationally or not?"

He looked at me and nodded, prompting me to gently take the tape from his mouth.

"Why did you have to tie me up?" he asked tearfully.

"Had to." I sounded cool, but his crying tore through me. It was never my intention to hurt him. "You came at me. Granted, I've abused you, and I did something terribly wrong, but I don't think I deserve a death sentence."

"What are you going to do with me?" He pulled at the ropes and nodded at each wrist.

At that point, something tugged at my mind. There was something incongruous about what I was seeing, but I couldn't spot what it was. "Since I paid cash and gave a false address and license number for the room, I'll leave you for the maid to discover—alive and healthy, except for the bruise. And, of course, I'll cover your cock . . . " And then I saw what it was.

Both of us stared at Jerry's erection.

"What's this?" I asked.

Jerry glared at me, but the look was no longer one of pure fury. It had been modified with an emotion I couldn't recognize. I was bewitched by it and couldn't remember ever seeing it on any man before.

Placing the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the outside of the door, I undressed and turned to look at my prisoner, who was staring at the ceiling. His cock was red and erect with a thin rivulet of drool coursing down the shaft.

I stood at his arm and stroked my own bloating cock. He glanced at it and swallowed anxiously.

"You're so beautiful," I whispered, kneeling at his hand. I gently kissed the big hand, then slipped a thick forefinger into my mouth. I sucked it lightly, then slipped a second finger inside. His cock swayed and his body shuddered. My tongue slid up his arm, broadly stroking the thick biceps and probing the delightfully fragrant armpits. Jerry's whole body began to tremble, and all his muscles flexed.

"Please, let me go," he begged unconvincingly.

"No way," I whispered.

Jerry arched his back and pushed his penis upward, as if seeking a hot, moist mouth. I sucked on his earlobes, licked his neck. I slavered the other fingers, then glissaded down his right side, down to his feet. I kissed his toes, then flickered up to the full, massive balls, which seemed to be trying to retreat into Jerry's body. I tasted his balls, causing him to cry out and arch his back once more.

"This is what I wanted," I whispered. "This is what I need." I took out my top denture and threw it into a chair, then lunged for the wrist-sized cock, swallowing it completely.

Jerry let out a feral howl. His eyes bulged. He ejaculated copiously down my throat, the last discharge finally coming to rest upon my tongue.

"Mmmm, Lordy," I groaned, savoring that last drop of his sweet, rich semen.

"Jesus Christ," whispered Jerry.

I sat cross-legged between his legs, watching him sleep. Easy words of explanation surfaced in my mind, then drifted back down as nonsense.

His eyes opened, and he stared at me with a savage yet erotic expression. His cock began to rise again and I started sucking it like a master. Starting with quiet, slick descents, I gradually brought him to face-pumping frenzy.

"Cum on me!" urged Jerry. "Cum on my stomach! Cum on my chest!"

I straddled Jerry's left thigh and masturbated furiously. Hot, white liquid burst forth from my cock and showered him from his crotch to his face. He licked away a drop which had landed on his lip, then his untouched penis erupted, sending thin jissom into every direction.

I pounced upon one of the high, arching clusters and caught it at zenith with my mouth. It was his prime seed, I thought. *He gave me a part of himself. A tiny patch of love, if you will.*

And so it went, throughout the morning, until Jerry's cock started to bleed slightly and my mouth began to hurt. Finally, while Jerry soundly slept, I dressed and packed, then loaded up the van. I sat at the desk and wrote:

"Dear Jerry: Without a doubt, you are the most exciting man I've ever met. I'm sorry you felt humiliated and deceived, but I'm not sorry for doing what I did. Does that make sense? If you want to have me arrested or if you want to stalk me and get even, I'll be at one of the Holiday Inns in the Tucson area from the day after tomorrow for about five days, then the same thing in Phoenix. After that, it's on to L.A. and a new life. If you weren't married, I'd probably stick around and see if I could 'break the stallion.' But you are, and I won't. So I'll say good-bye and thanks for your prime seed and the sweet magic. Warmest regards, Barney Wilkinson."

I lay the note on Jerry's pile of clothing, then gently cut his bonds. Jerry stirred but didn't wake up. Placing a towel over his crotch, I looked down at him, fighting off an immense desire to kiss him gently.

As I turned and left, I was assaulted by a swarm of conflicting emotions.

The view of Houston disappearing in my rear view mirror devastated me. Once, I pulled over, agonizing over whether or not to go back. But I didn't.

FIVE

ELDON

Friday, June 8

When I reached the outskirts of Tucson near dusk, I checked into the first Holiday Inn I encountered and immediately took a hot shower. Bundling myself inside a thick terry cloth robe, I made a double gin martini and dialed the number of my 65-year-old rancher pen-pal.

He answered in a rich, jolly voice which immediately

put me at ease.

"Pete Sciara?"

"Yeah," he boomed. "Who's this?"

"This is Barney Wilkinson from North Carolina. Did you get my message from Houston?"

"Yeah, but I was expecting you yesterday."

"Sorry about that. I can't drive as far without sleep as I once could."

"No problem. Where are you?"

"Uh . . . I'm staying at . . . " I glanced down at the telephone. "I'm staying at the Holiday Inn on Pine."

"In Tucson?"

"Yeah."

"Hell, I thought you'd stay at my place."

"I appreciate the offer, but I told someone I'd be staying here, and I'm more or less expecting a call. Besides, I'm really a filthy mess right now. I'll be there tomorrow."

"Well, I'm certainly glad you showed up, because I'm throwing a big party in your honor Saturday night. Hell, that's tomorrow, isn't it?"

I was stunned . . . and perhaps a little apprehensive. The gay lifestyle was so very new to me. "I guess I got here just in time. Lordy, what an honor. You shouldn't have."

"So, why don't you check out early and bring your ass over here. You have the map to my ranch?"

"Yeah." I glanced at the suitcase where the map was packed. "What time, eight-thirty, nine?"

"Fine. That's great. I'll have breakfast for you."

"Sounds great. See you then."

"Bye." He hung up.

I pressed down on the switch hook and dialed room service, ordering a club sandwich, a slice of pie and a carafe of wine. I turned on the television set and poured another shot of gin over what was left of my martini. Of course, I knew that I was drinking too much, and I wondered how long I could get by with drinking so heavily in light of my family history of diabetes and alcoholism.

The telephone rang, startling me. I assumed that Pete had forgotten to tell me something. "Hello?" I answered.

I could hear music in the background, then a click, followed by a dial tone.

Knowing in my gut that it was Jerry, I slowly placed the receiver in the cradle. "And what would you do if he asked you to come back, you stupid, spineless, obsessive sonofabitch," I mumbled, despising that part of me I'd never known was there.

A few minutes later the food came, and I picked at it, finally pushing it aside, opting for another drink instead. For hours I stared at the ceiling in near darkness.

Just before one in the morning, the phone rang again.

I quickly answered. "Hello, Jerry."

Silence.

"Talk to me, Jerry."

"Yeah . . . . This's Jerry," he slurred softly. "Jerry Boyd, the motherfucker you . . . kid . . . kidnapped and raped, cocksucker." Obviously he was drunk.

"You've been hitting the sauce."

"Fuck, yeah, I've been hitting the booze. Wouldn't you? "

"I have."

"*You* have? Hey, *I'm* the one that got . . . "

"Because I left part of myself with you."

More silence. Then, "Shit."

"Are you okay?"

"Fuck no, I'm not . . . o . . . okay. What did you do to me? You did something to me. What did you do? I can't . . . can't . . . sleep and . . . I can't fuck the old lady . . . " There was a gulping sound as he took another sip of his drink. "You fucked me up, asshole." There came the sound of a woman's inquiring voice, followed by the sound of a fumbled phone, followed by a resounding click.

I absently hung up the phone and fought back tears of guilt.

Saturday, June 9

Following the map, I drove north on Interstate 10 and took the Cortaro exit heading for a place called Silver Bell. After driving about ten miles, I saw the noted landmark of a yellow-painted rock and turned down a well-maintained gravel road until I came to a big ranch-style home. It wasn't a real working ranch as I had expected, but it was impressive nonetheless. The house had an attached six-car garage, and there were stables and pens in the back. A closer look indicated that he had at least two horses and some chickens. The grounds were surrounded by palm trees and saguaros, and there was a cactus garden in the front of the house. A sturdy chain link fence surrounded the five-acre spread and contained a pair of formidable-looking Rottweilers.

I drove up to the gate and pressed a button on an intercom. The dogs rushed toward me, barking.

"Coming!" Pete yelled from the front door.

I watched as a tall, handsome man with white hair strode to the gate. His eyes were sparkling light blue, and he looked immaculate in a white jump suit.

"You must be Barney. Just like your picture." He looked at the dogs. "Sit!" he ordered.

The dogs became silent and sat, looking up at Pete lovingly as they licked their snouts.

Pete smiled proudly at them and opened the gate.

"Beautiful dogs," I commented, glancing at them, then resting my gaze on the formidable bulge in Pete's crotch.

"Drive over to the garage while I close the gate."

I nodded and drove to the far end of the garage.

Joining Pete on the front porch, I shook his hand. "Well, we finally meet." I gazed into his eyes and felt very good about being there. I thought that perhaps things would begin to improve.

"Come on in and meet Phil," said Pete.

I followed him inside, wondering who Phil was.

The living room was packed with all sorts of well-maintained antique furniture; old artwork in ornate frames adorned the walls. Pete led me into a family room decorated in a more contemporary fashion. The room had a large wet bar with eight bar stools and overlooked a huge patio and pool. Erotic male artwork hung behind the bar.

"Can I get you a drink?" Pete asked.

"I could use a cup of coffee," I said, marvelling at the decor.

"I'll get it," said Phil, from the kitchen behind me.

I turned and saw a tall, very good-looking blond in his thirties. He also wore a white jump suit and had rings on each finger.

"Oh, Barney, this is Phil," said Pete.

Phil extended a limp hand. I shook it, cringing.

"Cream . . . sugar?"

"Uh . . . just black, thanks." Since Pete had said nothing about having a lover, I was confused about Phil.

Phil smiled and turned. "Can I get anything for you, Honey? he asked Pete.

"Coffee is fine." Pete smiled sheepishly at me as if he could read my mind. He gestured for me to follow him outside to the pool area.

We walked to the edge of the pool.

"I know I should have told you about Phil and me, but I showed your photo to several friends, and a couple of them wanted to meet you. I thought you wouldn't come if you knew about Phil. Sorry for the subterfuge."

I shrugged good-naturedly, having not as yet reacted fully. "From the looks of Phil it appears I wouldn't have turned you on anyway." Then I looked at him without hiding my annoyance.

Pete shook his head. "Oh, but you do, you do." He glanced around to make sure Phil couldn't hear. "Phil works, so you and I'll have our little opportunities after the weekend." He searched my eyes. "You'll forgive me, won't you?"

I moved around the side of the pool. "No problem. I'm just a little disappointed. It's par for the course on this trip." I smiled back at him. "This handsome guy walks out, and suddenly my heart starts pounding."

He forced a chuckle as I laughed bitterly.

"I really hope you don't feel you've driven a thousand miles for nothing."

My expression must have darkened somewhat, judging from Pete's reaction. I looked misty-eyed toward a distant mountain. "No. There was another reason why I drove that thousand miles."

Phil came out on the patio with a tray of coffee and sweet rolls. He placed them on a wrought iron and glass table. "Breakfast is served."

We joined him at the table.

"Everything's fine," Pete assured Phil.

Fine, my ass, I thought. *And they call this shit breakfast? I should go out and buy Egg McMuffins.*

Phil appeared relieved. "I would have been pissed."

"Well, he's not, thank God," Pete said, smiling warmly at me. "And we're going to make it up to him, too. Barney, have we got a party planned for you."

"He's invited eighty people, for crissakes," Phil chided.

"You're going to have two of the most eligible studs fighting over you," Pete announced.

"Both filthy rich," added Phil.

I became dizzy while looking from one to the other.

"Both very good-looking," said Pete.

"Only one's hung, though."

"Don't tell him which one."

"But the other's the best cocksucker."

Pete stared at Phil.

"I heard he was," Phil explained.

I pretended to listen. I longed to see Jerry—to comfort him and take full responsibility for exposing him to a part of himself he'd not wanted to face. I ached for the feel of Jerry's hard, red cock in my mouth and shivered at the thought of tasting his essence again.

As the bantering continued for well over an hour, I was about to abruptly leave when they announced that they had to drive into Tucson to do some last-minute shopping for the party. They asked me to go along, but I declined, saying that I was very tired and had to take a nap.

While they were gone, I retrieved my suitcase and explored the house and grounds. Afterwards, I took a swim and lay in the nude on a chaise longue. I decided that perhaps the party would do me some good.

Dressed in a green pullover shirt, tan slacks and tan canvass shoes, I stood nervously by the pool as the guests began to arrive. My facial muscles ached from a constant, unnatural smile I felt compelled to display. Worse, my cock itched due to my not wearing any underwear (Pete's suggestion). Each of the initial guests were brought before me and introduced; after an inane exchange of pleasantries, they excused themselves and headed for the bar and its unusual bartenders: two very tall young brothers wearing only sequined G-strings and matching arm bands.

"Oh, here's Ted!" exclaimed Pete. Then, in a lower voice: "The hungry bitch got here ahead of Dave."

I followed Pete's gaze to a rather oddly built, sixtyish man wearing an ill-fitting toupee. The man waved at some nearby friends with a limp wrist and shouted a falsetto greeting. I felt nauseated.

Pete pointed me out, and I could see by Ted's reaction that he was immediately attracted to me.

"Next," I mumbled to myself as Ted rushed over to greet me.

For the next several minutes, he gushed on about how wonderful Arizona was and why he got a PhD in Anthropology after having earned a PhD in Biochemistry. His breath reeked of gum disease, and his eyes were locked on my crotch.

A short time later, I was rescued by Pete, who introduced me to my alternate blind date, Dave, who shook my hand with a disappointed expression.

Pete grabbed Ted. "Come on . . . I want you to meet someone."

Ted protested as he was being led away. "What gives?" he whined.

I vaguely heard a part of Pete's answer after they were a few feet away: " . . . equal time . . . "

Dave was much more masculine, but he was an insufferable bore, dropping the names of actors, authors, U.S. Presidential cabinet members and sports figures in every other sentence. He went on and on about how he'd retired early from a mining company and invested astutely in real estate . . . and did I ever see a man whose body looked so great at seventy-two?

Miserable, I excused myself and went inside the house to use the bathroom. As I entered the family room, I looked back and saw that both Ted and Dave had started talking to each other at the bar. I decided to mingle and check out the rest of the party.

There were all sizes and shapes of guests, but I didn't see any Hispanics, blacks or Asians. A few younger men were there, but they seemed to be coupled with older men. Judging from the sedate expressions on the faces of most of the guests, I assumed that they were all coupled and that the only available men were those I had just had the ill-fortune of meeting outside. I realized that this group was a clique and that the party wasn't in any way thrown in my honor. Coupling that reality with the fact that I wasn't told of Pete's lover, I began to feel depressed and decided not to visit the pen-pal I was scheduled to see in Phoenix the following week.

The Death Valley dream flashed in my mind, and I wondered if I had waited too long to strike out in search of my dream. *Was the Death Valley dream prophetic?* I wondered. *Would my life end at my own hands somewhere in the Mojave Desert?* I began to have doubts about what *Mature Men* had

insisted upon: that there was a multitude of mature men out there who were decent and available. And then I remembered an editorial I'd read in a past issue—something about never giving up, that persistence and remaining positive were the keys to success.

Finding the bathroom, I urinated and entertained the idea of grabbing my suitcase from the guest bedroom and taking off for California. I couldn't see how I could possibly go back to Ted and Dave at poolside.

As I returned to the crowded family room, the door bell rang, and someone opened the door to let in a couple adorned with gold medallions and ostentatious diamond rings. The cool, fresh desert air hit me, and I felt compelled to go out into the dimly lit front yard.

The brilliance of the stars hit me like a massive, heroic chord on a pipe organ, leaving me breathless. I slowly strolled among the parked cars, my eyes transfixed on the Big Dipper. I took a deep breath of fresh air, then rubbed my arms because of the briskness of the night. A coyote cried in the distance, rebutted by Pete's Rottweilers, locked inside a runway at the far end of the property.

"Fantastic sight, isn't it?" It was a raspy, Aldo Ray-type voice.

I was startled and quickly turned to face a silhouette not ten feet away. The figure moved easily toward the light. "Funny how they get more intense out here in the desert."

I stared at the stocky shape approaching me. "Yeah, sure is," I said, my heart pumping fiercely from the initial shock.

The man leaned against a car opposite me and crossed his thick arms. He was about fifty with dark, receding hair and grey temples. His face was round and jovial. He was dressed in a plain western-style shirt, jeans and cowboy boots. "I can't stand it in there. Looks like you couldn't either." His voice was void of any gay affectation. On the contrary, he sounded quite masculine and didn't seem to fit in with the crowd inside.

I smiled. "Cigarette smoke's awful. That, plus the host made a couple of dates for me."

"Real dogs, huh?"

I laughed. "I don't even know these people. I'm just passing through from North Carolina."

"I have a date inside, too."

"Oh?" I was disappointed.

"One of my clients, believe it or not."

"Clients?" I was puzzled.

"I'm a mechanical contractor out of Riverside, California. I'm bidding some work out here, and he's their vice-president of engineering." He glanced at the house in disgust. "He calls the shots on seven million dollars worth of work."

I was amazed. "What in the world are you doing at a gay party then?"

The man turned his head in the direction of another coyote yelp. "I made the stupid mistake of letting him blow me once when I took him out on a business dinner. We both had too much to drink, and he just reached over and grabbed my dick in the car. What am I going to do, kick a seven-million-dollar client out of the car?" He grinned. "But then, I shouldn't say 'stupid,' because that blow job's going to lead to a hell of a lot of work. I figure, for seven mill, I'll do just about anything."

"You're too expensive for my pocketbook." I chuckled, scanning his body. "I'd venture to say that I could probably give you the best blow job of your life, but I wouldn't pay you a fucking dime." I was shocked by my arrogance.

He studied me. "You got the wrong impression. I like men, but this guy isn't my type."

"You don't look gay to me," I said, my interest acutely elevated.

"I'm not. At least not in the same sense as most of those guys in there. It's sort of a stupid label, don't you think?" He looked me up and down. "You don't look the part either."

I laughed, thinking about all the bizarre things I'd done the past few days. "I'm pretty new at all this. Until almost six years ago I was straight."

He looked amazed. "Seems like we have a lot in common. I had my first sex with a man about eight years ago . . . and we're both turned off by the scene in there."

I grinned. "Not to mention that I'm a contractor, too."

"You're shittin' me." He frowned in disbelief.

"*Was*, actually. I sold my business after my wife died almost three months ago."

"Sorry to hear that." The combined look of compassion and sadness briefly crossed his face.

"Don't be. It gave me a new lease on life. We weren't getting along."

"What kind of contractor were you?"

"General. I didn't have to work with union pipe fitters like you probably do. I direct-hired non-union carpenters, laborers, operators . . . contracted the rest of it."

He looked at his watch anxiously.

"You're married, aren't you?" I asked, determined to keep him talking.

He grinned and looked at his bare ring finger. "It shows?"

"In a way." I was becoming more and more attracted to him.

He looked at me in a lecherous way. "Too bad we have to leave soon; otherwise, I'd see if you *are* the best."

"Where're you headed?" I tried to mask my disappointment.

"Airport. Have to catch the last flight back home. I have to bring my wife home from the hospital real early tomorrow morning."

"When is the last flight?"

"About an hour." He looked at his watch again.

"An hour?" I realized how long it had taken me to get to Pete's place from the motel, which wasn't far from the airport. "You'd better get movin', my friend."

"Yeah." He sighed and slipped his hands inside his pockets. "He said he'd meet me out here ten minutes ago, but he's probably bombed by now. This is his car here." He patted the hood of a Continental. "I'd better go look for him."

With a mixture of disappointment tempered by the exciting realization that people like him existed and were available under the right circumstances, I nodded and watched him walk away. I decided that meeting him had been a very positive experience.

"Nice talking to you," he said over his shoulder.

"You can't imagine how nice it was for me."

He seemed to falter as his eyes lingered on me. "See ya." He turned and disappeared inside the house.

Further disappointed that he'd not offered me his card or telephone number, I walked toward the garage to see if my van was blocked in. It wasn't. I decided that I would wait around until my big friend came back out, then bluntly ask him for his card. After that, I'd slip inside to get my suitcase and shove off.

I stopped suddenly. "What if I'm not his type?" I vigorously shook my head. "No, if you're not his type, then make him *think* you are."

Holding that positive thought, I slipped around the

back of the house and watched as several of the guests swam in the nude. Some were even having sex on chaise longues. I spotted Ted gesturing with a drink from a crowd near the bar and saw Dave swimming with one of the few young men. Then I recognized my stocky friend, who was looking anxiously for the vice-president.

I heard the sound of the front door slamming and walked back to the front, where I saw a very drunk middle-aged man staggering toward the cars. He stopped once to vomit, then moved on, nearly falling twice. He got inside the Continental and sped away, sideswiping the open front gate. I looked down at my watch and smiled. "Looks like you done missed your flight, big guy."

Unnoticed by my hosts, I claimed my suitcase and took it out to the van. Then I returned to the front porch and sat. Only seconds later, the big man walked out and said, "Shit," as he saw the empty space where the luxury car had been. "That chickenshit, no good . . . "

"You wouldn't have wanted to ride with the sonofabitch anyway," I interrupted, startling him. "I doubt if he's going to make it home alive."

He slumped and sat next to me, burying his face in his large hands.

"What's your name?"

He looked at me absently. "Eldon. Eldon Witherspoon. You?"

We shook hands; his touch inflamed me to instant erection.

"Barney. Barney Wilkinson," I said, my teeth almost chattering out of pure lust. "Glad to meet you . . . . Now, do you need a ride? I'm going your way, I believe."

Eldon shook his head and looked at his watch. "It's too late now. I just remembered that they were overbooked and told me I had to get there early to get a boarding pass."

I stood and stretched. "I don't mean a ride to the airport. I figure we could make Riverside in, say, eight hours if we push it and take turns driving." I walked toward the van, looking back to enjoy the surprised look on his face. "Well, are you coming?"

Looking confused yet relieved, he ran to catch up.

I drove back to Interstate 10 as Eldon sat in silence.

"I suppose your suitcase was in your client's car," I said, trying to start a conversation.

"Yeah, I was just thinking about the estimates and all the other proprietary shit inside. I suppose he'll see it all now." He groaned. "And my good electric razor. Shit."

I couldn't keep from laughing and felt good when he joined me. "I'll bet he'll feel so guilty that he won't even look inside. He'll probably ship it to you UPS next day air."

I sensed that he was studying me. It seemed a safe assumption that he was wary of me and probably wondering why a man he'd known for only ten minutes would drive him all the way to California.

I spotted a diner at the Eloy exit and turned off the freeway. "I think we could both use some coffee and a bite to eat."

"Sounds like a winner," said Eldon, stretching his powerful body. "I'm buying, so no arguments."

I shrugged and led the way inside.

A tired-looking older waitress ushered us to a booth overlooking the van and brought us coffee. We both ordered hearty breakfasts.

In the light, Eldon looked even better. His skin was light, yet rosy and healthy-looking. He had beautiful teeth and a very kissable mouth. But his light-blue eyes impressed me the most. In them I could see a simple honesty and a capacity for loving someone fully. He didn't appear protective or devious; there was a hint of vulnerability in spite of the fact that he didn't seem the least bit naive.

"What's wrong?" he asked, apparently noticing my intense scrutiny.

I was embarrassed. "I'm sorry. It's your eyes."

"Do they turn you on?" he asked self-consciously. It was obvious that he was kidding.

"Very much," I answered quite seriously.

He looked surprised. "Really?"

"You project a very pleasant . . . comforting . . . strength." I glanced down at his large, rugged hands, which added to the projection.

He appeared touched by my comment. "You're not so bad yourself. I really like your eyes, too."

"Does this mean it's mutual?"

We both chuckled.

"Seems so." He leaned back and rested his right leg on the seat. "You really are going to get me to Riverside, aren't you?"

"On time, too." I likewise made myself more comfortable in the booth.

"Why?"

I took a sip of coffee and noticed the outline of Eldon's nipples and the salt-and-pepper chest hair peeking over his shirt. "Because I have nowhere special to go . . . and I'd dearly love to drain every ounce of juice you got."

"You don't have to take me all the way to Riverside to get that." He looked at me with a comic lustfulness, then became serious again. "Why don't you have a place to go? Are you homeless?"

I chuckled. "In a way I am, but not like you think. You could say that I'm financially independent." I had no intention of scaring him off with my net worth. "I'm comfortably retired."

"So . . . you're on a vacation?" Eldon guessed.

"No." I shook my head vigorously. "I'm starting over with a clean slate. I'm letting my heart search for what it yearns."

The statement seemed to move him.

"There's no rhyme or reason to what I'm doing. After my wife died, my kids found out . . . you know. . . that I like men and banned me from seeing my grandkids. That sort of took care of my family ties, so I just . . . shoved off. Free spirit. Looking for love in all the wrong places. When I know you better, I'll tell you about the crazy thing I did in Houston." I rolled my eyes up. "Boy, it's hell being over sixty, naive and horny."

He smiled. "So, how do you know you want to get to know me better?"

I studied him. "I don't know. Gut feeling, I guess. You're a big surprise to me. I never thought there were people like you in this kind of life."

Eldon sipped his coffee and watched me thoughtfully. "I have a hard on."

I laughed. "You do?"

He didn't laugh. "A raging hard on."

I partially slid down in the seat and pretended to look, then scanned around to see if anyone was watching. "I wonder if anyone would notice if I . . . "

"I yell when I come."

The waitress arrived with the food, and we both ate like pigs. After eating we had another cup of coffee each and purchased a bag of donuts to go.

I'd driven only a couple of miles when I saw the exit called "Toltec/Arizona City" and pulled off the freeway. "I'll be damned if I don't have to piss."

"You know, I think I do, too," said Eldon, his voice tinged with expectancy.

I drove through Arizona City and pulled off on a lonely dirt road, killing the engine. The closest lights were miles away.

I got out and walked around to Eldon's side. We pissed side-by-side, staring at each other's surging cocks. I saw that his was short and not quite as fat as Jerry's.

"This looks like a job for Superman." I fondled it, bringing it to erection.

Eldon wrapped his huge arms around me and kissed me very tenderly on the lips, bringing a mistiness to my eyes. As I melted into his chest, I realized that the last time anyone had kissed me like that was when Ann still loved me passionately. So many years, I thought.

I cupped Eldon's face in my hands and kissed him deeply, aware of the onrushing passion coursing through his system.

Then the chemical reaction hit like lightning and gravity ceased to exist. We both probed deeply with our tongues, and our trembling hands fumbled with buttons and zippers. I jerked on the sliding door, and we both fell onto the van's plush carpeting. Clothing and legs and arms became intertwined as each of us struggled to go down on the other. The bizarre sixty-nine finally accomplished, Eldon clumsily sucked my cock, exposing his inexperience. Knowing that my cock would be sore later but not having the heart to stop him, I said nothing and threw my upper dental plate to the carpet. Deftly, I began to slide his cock down my throat, surprised that I had learned so much in Houston. And then it occurred to me that it had less to do with experience than desire, flexibility and imagination. I made a mental note to discuss those factors with Eldon some day.

As my mouth came to rest at the base of his cock, he roared like a bear and attempted to take all of me, only to gag and ripple with convulsions. Burying his face in my crotch, he flexed his legs to knot-hardness and licked my balls. Shortly, I felt a slight trembling throughout his body and voraciously engulfed him. The trembling escalated to spasms very quickly, and Eldon's cock erupted in climax, sending sweet semen swirling around my uvula, down my gullet.

Concurrently laughing and crying, I climaxed rapturously over the massive hands holding my cock and balls, then felt Eldon's warm mouth as it enveloped my cock, calming its convulsions.

We both collapsed onto our backs, breathing and sweating heavily. Eldon's sticky hand reached for mine; our hands squeezed in earnest.

Sunday, June 10

We had agreed that I would drive to Quartzite while he slept on the pull-out bed in back, then he would drive the rest of the way as I slept. When we made the switch, it was after three.

Shortly after seven, I was awakened by a gentle shake from Eldon.

"Hey, sex pot, we're here."

"Huh?" I opened my eyes and was assaulted by brilliant sunlight. "Where are we?"

"Riverside." Eldon gestured grandly. "Dissa mah house," he said with a bad Italian accent.

I rubbed my eyes and looked through the van's curtains. We were parked in a semicircular driveway in front of a handsome, two-story white house with red tile roof and what appeared to be metal siding. Tall palm trees lined the driveway, and shrubs and flowers of myriad colors lined the sidewalk leading to the front porch. At the far end of the driveway there was a three-car garage, and on either side was an expanse of well-manicured lawn with several varieties of Eucalyptus and pepper trees.

"Let's clean up first and have some breakfast," said Eldon. "Then, if you don't mind, we'll pick up Ruth in your van. It'll be more comfortable for her because she's in a wheelchair."

I yawned. "And how will you explain me?"

Instead of answering, he helped me up to a sitting position. I'd slept more soundly than at any other time in recent memory, and I was very groggy.

"You can take the van yourself if . . . "

"I want you to go along," he interrupted. "I'll tell her that fuckface got sick and couldn't get me to the airport and that I ran into you and you were headed this way . . . . I'll think of something."

I was too groggy to argue.

A plump Hispanic maid poured me another cup of coffee as we were finishing breakfast out on a colorful, flower-ringed patio near a moderately-sized swimming pool. We'd both feasted on perfectly prepared French toast, sausage and hash browns. We were freshly showered, having taken one together inside a huge, sunken tub in a large, elaborate bathroom.

"Paulita," called Eldon.

"Yes, Mister Witherspoon," she answered in a thick Mexican accent, unable to pronounce the "h" in Eldon's last name.

"We're gonna bring Ruth home today."

Her face lit up.

"But you won't have to worry about the dressings any more. I'm bringing in a nurse tomorrow."

She seemed disappointed. "But Mister Witherspoon, I do not mind taking care of her."

"I know," Eldon said gently. "But you've got enough to do around here without that, too . . . okay?"

She shrugged, obviously miffed. "Yes, sir." She cleared off the table and disappeared inside the house.

Eldon apparently noticed my confused look. "Ruth had lung cancer," he said softly. "Her right lung was removed awhile back. They think they got it all, but with all the radiation treatments and the surgery, she has a nasty hole in her back. She needs constant attention with the drainage."

"I'm sorry," I offered.

"We've both talked about this, and I guess you can say that we're prepared for the worst." His eyes were misty. "The tumors were pretty advanced, so the cancer's probably spread. Oh, they've done tests, bone scans, whatever, but both of us know that it's there, somewhere." He shook his head and smiled plaintively. "She's also got heart failure, so we just take one day at a time."

"Does she know about . . . ?" I nodded, looking around for Paulita.

He smiled. "She should, but I don't think so. You see, she had a bungled hysterectomy, and it did something to her lining. Intercourse was too painful, so we gave it up." He took a sip from his coffee and regarded my expression, obviously

trying to gauge how I was taking all the revelations. "I just couldn't justify having another woman, even though I began to climb the walls. I love the woman dearly." His eyes misted over more. "So one night I was out drinking with some construction buddies on a job up near Las Vegas, and we all went inside this gay bar by mistake." His expression lightened. "Well, before I realized what we'd done, I went to the john and pissed, and this guy freaks out over me. Scared the shit out of me. So we all leave, yelling insults at everybody, but I couldn't wipe that freaked-out guy from my mind. Well, to make a long story short, I ditched the buddies and went back to that bar. Man, I went into the john and three guys followed me. I was having fun, showing it hard and watching those fuckers drool and paw at me. One of them wanted to suck me off there, but I wasn't that hard up. Then this wiry, rugged-looking, grey-haired guy starts talking to me at the bar, and before I knew it, he had me up to his hotel room on the Strip. Jesus, he turned me every way but loose! I think that sort of set a pattern for my liking guys older than me."

I was thoroughly amused and impressed. "When did you accept the fact that you were gay?" But I quickly followed with: "I mean, when did you accept . . . ?"

He shrugged. "When did I accept the fact that I like men? Oh, about a couple of years ago, after a long period of self-loathing over my *strange desires* and just about the time I realized that I wouldn't have Ruth much longer. I went down the very first time. This guy I thought I was in love with." He smiled at me. "You're only the second man I've ever gone down on."

"I'm honored," I said, thinking of Jerry. "Actually, we have a *hell* of a lot in common. You're only the second man *I've* gone down on."

"You're kidding!"

I shook my head. "Both married. Both deprived and forced to go out and find it somewhere else. Both settling on men instead of women."

"A lot in common," Eldon said, studying me keenly. It was obvious that he really liked me. "So . . . what are your plans?"

I sighed and felt weary as I realized that every man I'd met on my odyssey was spoken for by someone else. "Keep moving until I find someone to settle down with. I don't have a hell of a lot of time."

His expression became more serious. "And how will you know?"

I studied him. "I guess I'll just know. A heart knows when its found a home."

"Let's cut out the fucking games, Barney," Eldon said sternly. "Something wonderful happened between us, or was it just my imagination?"

His tone caught me off guard, so I chose my words carefully. "Something . . . something incredible happened between us . . . but you're married." I paused, collecting more words. "I'm sixty-two. I want a home and a man to myself. I don't want to share him with a woman."

"You're full of shit, Barney."

I drew back, becoming miffed.

"For just those reasons, you should stick around here for awhile. Suppose you leave here and you never have another experience like me?" He rolled up his eyes, suddenly embarrassed. "I'm sorry. That was pretty pompous, wasn't it? Shit, who am I fooling? Of course, you can find someone better than me."

I shook my head sadly. "I doubt very seriously if I could. I . . . " I paused, knowing that I had to expose the real me. "I'm so afraid of dying alone." My eyes felt misty. "I want to live, eat and sleep with a special man who's made me number one in his life. Someone I've made number one as well. I don't want a night to go by without sleeping with him and cuddling with him the next morning and feeding him the right foods and taking care of his needs." I sighed and slumped into the chair. "I think I'd rather live like a wayfarer unless I can have that."

Eldon stood up and walked around the pool. He looked up at a window above the garage. "There's an almost completed bedroom above the garage. Before Ruth got sick we used to entertain quite a bit. She never wanted to allow guests to drive after drinking, so we decided to add on a fifth bedroom. I could have it liveable in less than a week."

I followed his gaze.

He turned and looked at me with concern. "I want you in my life."

I shuddered, feeling a sharp pang of anxiety. "You just met me."

"I want you in my life."

"You don't know me," I countered.

He smiled like a man who'd just realized that he was about to win at chess. "Shall we go meet Ruth?"

I nodded and reluctantly stood up, glancing again at the window over the garage. I thought of Jerry and felt acutely depressed. *Of course . . . Jerry. Haunting . . . Jerry.*

The instant I met Ruth, a frail, petite woman with silver hair and large, doe-like eyes, I felt that Eldon's plan was destined for failure. She had definitely smelled the proverbial rat, I was sure, and Eldon was so determined to make it work that he couldn't sense the friction.

While I drove, she sat in silence in the back, a collapsible wheelchair on the seat next to her; Eldon told the story that I'd happened along at the Tucson motel's front desk as he was frantically trying to get transportation to Riverside. I watched her face in the rear-view mirror as the story unfolded; she hardly flinched.

"I thought I'd finish off the garage apartment and let Barney stay there while he works out his grief over his wife," he said.

She stared, stone-faced, at the back of my head.

"I'd feel so much better knowing that there was a man around in case of an emergency, and you know I've always wanted to finish that apartment anyway."

Her gaze rose and met mine in the mirror.

I wondered if she was able to read the panic I felt over being pulled into their lives.

Tuesday, June 11

The nurse arrived the next day. Gretchen, a masculine, heavy-set black woman, wore a crisp, white uniform and spotless white shoes. Ruth seemed to like her, but Paulita was obviously either jealous or prejudiced. Of course, Eldon had checked her job history and all her references. She'd been an intensive care nurse at the same hospital Ruth had been checked into so many times, so it wasn't as if she was a stranger. Eldon had placed an ad in a regional newspaper and Gretchen answered it, citing burnout as her reasons for wanting to quit working at the hospital. But somehow I sensed that there was more to her wanting to be a live-in nurse.

Eldon moved Gretchen into his bedroom next to Ruth's master bedroom and had Paulita move from the maid's quarters to the guest bedroom across the hall from Gretchen. When Paulita complained, Eldon silenced her by pointing out that she

would be better able to help take care of Ruth. That left Eldon with the maid's quarters, adjacent to the stairway to the garage apartment, which was scheduled for completion in another couple of days.

Wednesday, June 13

While two carpenters worked on finishing the garage apartment, I stayed at a motel near Eldon's construction company instead of staying around the house with the three women. Of course, Eldon came over for "lunch" each of the two days I was there, and I was invited for dinner at the house both nights. Except for the occasional, inexplicable pining for Jerry, I began to mellow over Eldon's plan and felt more-or-less happy. It occurred to me that the guilt over Jerry would ultimately disappear and that I would learn to reciprocate Eldon's intense love for me. I was highly flattered, but I wasn't in love.

Ruth eventually became more friendly toward me after I'd had dinner with them a couple of times. I began to find her witty and entertaining, an about-face from the image she'd projected the first day. I found myself liking her very much.

It was the night before I was to move into the garage apartment. Paulita served dinner and sat with us to dine. Ruth sat at the head of the table in her wheelchair and Eldon sat at the other end. I found it admirable that Ruth had insisted years ago that Paulita was one of the family and would dine with her employers. As we ate in silence, it was obvious that Ruth was feeling better and pleased with Gretchen.

She smiled at me and asked, "Do you have children, Barney?"

The question threw me, and I almost said that I was childless. After all, in a way I was. "Yes. A daughter and a son. They're married and live in Hendersonville, North Carolina." I took a sip of sherry. "Unfortunately . . . unfortunately, we're estranged, you might say."

Gretchen followed the conversation with darting, wise eyes. "Do they have families?"

"Oh, yeah." I took a bite of salad and wished for a subject change.

Ruth stared at me. "You're not close to your grandchildren?"

I glanced at Eldon, who monitored the conversation nervously. "Having a hostile son and daughter isn't conducive to getting close to your grandchildren." I decided to go on the offense. "How about you and Eldon?"

Ruth looked sadly at Eldon, who cleared his throat and fidgeted.

My attention was drawn to Paulita, who suddenly stopped eating and stared in dread at Ruth.

Eldon took a bite of stir-fried lobster and snow peas, chewing it slowly. After swallowing, he cleared his throat again.

Gretchen opened her mouth, ostensibly to defuse the tension my question had caused.

"Ruth and I had twin boys," Eldon said before Gretchen could say anything.

The word "had" hung in the air like a piercing scream.

"They both drowned in a boating accident about twenty years ago."

The resulting silence was unbearable. As Ruth continued eating, Gretchen shook her head and stared at her food.

"Lordy," I whispered.

Eldon seemed embarrassed over his abrupt delivery and quickly changed the subject. "Barney, remember that job in Tucson?"

I nodded.

"Well, that V.P. called me today and gave me the award: seven million."

Unable to shake off the shock of Eldon's previous revelation, I spoke without thinking. "I wonder if he did it out of guilt? Did he say why he left the party?" Then I realized what I was saying. "Uh . . . I mean, the . . . "

Eldon's eyes narrowed in panic as he glanced at Ruth, who didn't register a reaction. "No. He just apologized for forgetting."

My eyes were drawn to Gretchen, who smiled faintly, as if she knew exactly what was going on.

"Well, your apartment will be ready for you tomorrow, Barney," announced Eldon.

I nodded and smiled, then decided to wipe the knowing look off Gretchen's face. "What about you, Gretchen?"

"What about me?" she responded dryly.

"You have a family?"

She dabbed at her lips with a napkin. "Up until a couple of days ago, I was sharing a house with a girl friend in Fontana."

Bingo, I thought.

"My family is all back in Georgia," she continued. "I don't do this because I'm seeking a surrogate family. I just prefer temporary one-on-one nursing to working in a hospital."

The word "temporary" reverberated in my mind. I wondered if Ruth knew that she was terminal. Somehow, I knew that she did.

Later, Paulita cleared the table and brought brandy, coffee and tarts for dessert. Ruth declined and excused herself, asking Gretchen to wheel her to her room.

I stood up. "Good night, Ruth."

She stared at me while she was being wheeled away, then smiled and waved like a child.

While Paulita busied herself in the kitchen, Eldon clandestinely grabbed my knee and squeezed it, prompting me to cover his hand with mine.

Gretchen returned to the table, and the three of us ate dessert in silence. Afterwards, Eldon poured brandy into my glass, then his own.

"Gretchen, if you'll excuse us, we're going to inspect the garage apartment."

The nurse nodded, still projecting that knowing, slight smile.

I smiled back and followed Eldon out of the room.

Thursday, June 14

Eldon had flown to Tucson to finalize the contract, so I prepared to check out of my motel and move into the garage apartment. While packing, I thought of Jerry and felt an irresistible urge to call him. The feeling frightened me. It was as if my obsession had merely been in remission. But as the urge persisted and lured me to the telephone, I rationalized that I was being seized by a combination of curiosity and guilt. *Surely I wasn't doomed to a tormented life of obsessive behavior. Or was I?*

I called Houston information and asked for the number for a Jerry Boyd on Quintero Court. A part of me hoped that his number would be unlisted, but a greater part rejoiced when a synthetic voice stated the number. I wrote it down and stared at it.

As I dialed the number, another tug-of-war began, and

I could almost hear tiny voices shouting, *"No answer!"* And another: *"Answer!"*

"Hello?" It was a soft, female voice with a groggy edge.

"Is this Jerry Boyd's residence?" I asked, my voice trembling with anxiety.

There was a pause. "Yes, it is . . . uh . . . . Who's calling, please?" The woman had obviously been sleeping. She had a thick Texas accent.

"My name is Barney Wilkinson. I'm an old friend of Jerry's from Blackburn. Is he around or is he at work?"

"Barney Wilkinson," she repeated dreamily. "Wilkinson . . . . Oh, yes . . . I . . . I remember now. You'll have to forgive me, Mister Wilkinson, but the doctor gave me some pills and I . . . " She chuckled. " . . . can't seem to remember my name." There was another pause, then fumbling sounds, like she had moved the receiver to a different ear. "My goodness, how long's it been? Jerry wondered what happened to you. I don't know how many times he said that you were like a father to him when you worked together in Saudi Arabia."

"Yeah," I said, playing the part, "I guess I was." I tried to chuckle, but only a shudder came out. "So, uh, where is he?"

She started to weep softly. "He's in the hospital again."

I felt a sinking sensation. "Hospital?"

"I suppose you knew why he got in trouble in Saudi Arabia—the alcohol and all. Well, he was doing so well, and then he suddenly started drinking again last week." She began to sob. "He's in an alcoholic treatment center over at Medical Center. I feel so helpless, and I don't have anyone to talk to. Blackburn fired him, Mister Wilkinson. He doesn't have a job now and things aren't looking that good here in Houston. I'm afraid we might lose the house." The sobs lessened as she obviously tried to regain control. "Please, Mister Wilkinson, he's listened to you before. Please talk to him before he destroys himself."

"Don't cry," I soothed. "I'll talk to him. Can you tell him I called and have him call me back?" I wondered if he would.

"Yes," she said haltingly. "He's getting discharged from the hospital in three days. I'll have him call you then."

After calming her down, I gave her Eldon's number, knowing that I would have to bring out the whole thing to Eldon if and when he did call. I promised Jerry's wife that I wouldn't abandon my good friend, Jerry Boyd. Then I allowed the guilt to attack me broadside with a vengeance; I fully accepted the responsibility for Jerry's relapse.

SIX

RUTH

Tuesday, July 17

A month passed. Jerry never called, nor did I have the guts to call again. I assumed that he'd probably filled his wife in on the sham. Although the guilt was still present, I did feel relieved that I wouldn't have to tell Eldon about Jerry.

The garage apartment turned out nicely, and I began to enjoy living in Eldon's house. When he was in town, he would sleep with me from late at night until the crack of dawn, when he would slip downstairs and pretend he was asleep when Paulita awakened him, like she'd done for years.

As his company experienced an unprecedented surge in growth, Eldon had to be on the road much more than normal. Consequently, I found myself sleeping alone for up to four nights a week. I wanted to travel with him, but I knew that it would be impossible with the engineers and sales personnel who usually accompanied him on the trips.

I became bored and tried to fill my time by doing gardening and taking up tinkering with a personal computer. Occasionally I would spend time with Ruth, but I really didn't want to get too close for fear of accidentally exposing my relationship with her husband. On the other hand, Gretchen took a liking to me, and we seemed to be headed for a close relationship.

That afternoon, Gretchen asked me to watch over Ruth while she went out on an errand for a couple of hours. I noticed that she'd been crying, so I agreed without comment. Ruth was dozing in her wheelchair by the pool, and I casually approached her, sitting in a chaise longue nearby. The slight essence of a sweet perfume wafted into my nostrils.

She turned to me and smiled. "Ah, my interim baby sitter."

"Hello, Sweetheart," I said, ala Humphrey Bogart. "You smell nice."

She laughed. "I wear it to mask the drainage odor."

"How do you feel today?" I asked, noticing that her color had begun to deteriorate.

"Much better than Gretchen, I'd venture to say," she said, watching Paulita dump garbage into cans beside the garage.

"I wonder what's wrong?"

"You noticed it too, huh?" She studied me. "I just hope I don't end up having to nurse her. She's hurting . . . ." She sighed. "Like you."

I squinted at her, shielding my eyes from the sun.

"You know," she continued, "Eldon has no idea he's about to lose you."

I was speechless for a few moments, then regained my composure. "Is he?"

"I think so," she said softly.

"Why is it that married men think their wives are so naive?"

"Because most of them are afraid to express what they feel is happening. You have to be in touch with your bones." She smiled. "Eldon always had a powerful sex drive. Suddenly he's supposed to stop having sex because I couldn't accommodate him?" She looked at me for a response. "He never changed, and I know he never touched another woman, so it had to be men. I've always felt that he's bisexual."

"Have you ever tried to tell him that you know?"

She shook her head. "What purpose would it serve? This way is easier on him. If he knew that I knew, it would intimidate him." She chuckled and looked impish. "It's a source of wicked delight to both Gretchen and me. Sooner or later, Eldon's going to oversleep with you and not make it back in time for Paulita's wake-up call."

"Gretchen's in on it, too, huh?" I was amazed at how much she knew and was delighted that she was sharing it with me.

"Gretchen and I got off on the wrong foot at first. But she needed the job and I needed her, so we had a meeting of minds. I knew she'd been living with a woman."

More revelations! It was delicious. "I figured she was a lesbian. So that's what's wrong now, correct? Domestic problems?"

"All I know is that she was trying to get back together

with this girl, Sylvia. I don't know the circumstances." She paused. "Is your problem complicated, or are you just bored?"

"You're getting too much sun on one side." I got up and started pushing her wheelchair to the other side of the pool. "It's both, really. I'm bored and I'm tormented by a man in Houston. I, uh . . . you know . . . compromised him and it, well, it . . . . I think I screwed him up."

"How old?"

"Mid-thirties, I think. He started drinking heavily and lost his job." I stopped the wheelchair and moved to face her.

There was a hint of derision in her expression. "In his mid-thirties and he reacts like that? Sounds to me like you just triggered something that was already there."

I shrugged. "Perhaps. I just have this very strong sense of responsibility. Maybe I'm over-reacting."

"Maybe you're in love with him."

I shook my head. "I don't know anything about him. There was never any tenderness—just sex. Bizarre sex at that. Besides, he's married."

She crossed her arms and looked down. "Are you in love with Eldon?"

I considered the question and pulled up a lawn chair. "He's married, too." I looked into her kind, wise eyes. "He's yours, not mine. The reason I'm here is because he loves me and because he's my best friend. Yes, I love him, but not near as much as I could . . . "

"If I weren't here," she interrupted.

I bent down and kissed her on the cheek. "I'd rather you be here, lady. You dress up this world."

She appeared moved and looked away. Just then, the telephone rang and Paulita answered it. It was Eldon wanting to talk to Ruth, so I pushed her to the phone and walked into the family room to watch television. I heard Ruth tell Paulita that Eldon would be home in time for dinner, then heard her call out my name.

"Yes?"

"Pick up the extension!" she yelled, coughing from the effort.

I picked up a nearby phone and heard the other extension disconnect. "Hi."

"Hello, Sweety," said Eldon. "God, I miss you."

"Me, too," I said, wondering why I was being so cautious. "I miss you, too," I corrected. "What time are you getting here?"

"About four. That should give us time to have a little fun before dinner—provided we can get rid of the others."

I smiled. "I don't think that will be a problem."

That Afternoon

With a puzzled expression, Eldon entered the garage apartment right behind me. "That was too easy. Normally she would have been pissed."

"Who?" I asked, feigning ignorance. I turned and kissed him hungrily. "Lordy, I missed you."

He melted into me and moaned. "I was talking about Ruth. She didn't question why I wanted to have a drink with you alone. She seemed to encourage it." He kissed me on my neck and nibbled at my earlobes, then frowned. "And that Gretchen. Am I imagining it, or is she smiling at you a lot lately? I wonder if she knows the score?"

I unbuttoned his shirt and began breathing hot air into his chest hair. "Beats me."

"What if Ruth wants me for something?" he said, frowning again.

"Then Gretchen will take care of it. Don't worry," I soothed, unbuckling his belt and unzipping his pants.

"Jesus, who turned up *your* thermostat?" mumbled Eldon.

I claimed the fat penis, causing air to rush into Eldon's lungs. I led him by his swelling cock into the small bedroom and onto the queen-size bed. Slowly and seductively, I slid off his clothing and shoes.

"I could probably use a shower," he protested weakly.

"You never smell bad to me." I eased myself on to him.

Dislodging my upper plate and placing it on the nightstand, I lightly kissed his lips and eyelids, then his nose and forehead. I sucked on his chin and neck then slid my tongue down into his underarms, breathing in the unique aroma of a robust man. I fluttered my tongue over the top of each hard biceps, now flexed to excite me even more. I whimpered and reached into a night stand for a pre-lubricated condom and a tube of Vaseline. "Since you've been such a good boy, I'm gonna give you a ride."

He appeared worried. "You don't have to do this for me, Sweety. It's not your thing, and you haven't done it before. It might hurt you."

"Not if I relax. I read that once in a book store in North Carolina. No, I know you've wanted to, and now I want to do it. I even cleaned and stretched myself while you unpacked."

Eldon kissed me deeply and shuddered as I stretched the condom over his cock and lubricated it with Vaseline. Straddling his waist, I looked back at the gleaming, moist penis as it throbbed and swayed. Applying a glob of lubricant to my sphincter, I carefully lowered myself onto the hard flesh and felt my orifice stretch, then rebel and tighten up. Patiently, I waited, still maintaining pressure. The first muscle gave way, then the second one relaxed somewhat, allowing Eldon's cockhead to slip inside. I slowly added more pressure until the pain subsided. Cautiously I moved up and down on the shaft until it became more pleasurable than painful. His face took on a look of wildness, the likes of which I'd never seen on him before. The expression inflamed my rectal walls; I began to feel feverish.

"This ain't no sixty-two-year-old ass," Eldon choked.

"Oh, yes it is," I growled. "It just got liberated."

With that, Eldon turned me over without pulling out and spread my legs apart and high, occasionally biting my toes. Rhythmically he pushed his bulbous cock in and out, mesmerizing me into complete submission. A small drop of perspiration beaded on his forehead, followed by several more. Soon, tiny streams of sweat coursed down his face, joining other tributaries at his matted chest. Humidity began to fill the room as both of us glistened with moisture. Saliva slipped through his clenched teeth. His eyes bulged.

He began to chant in a low, guttural tone: "Ahhnn . . . ahhnn . . . ahhnn . . . " He grabbed my cock and stroked it, pushing me near the edge, eliciting a similar, higher-pitched chant of my own.

Then a grunt like that of a rutting bull rhinoceros preceded a sharp slap of his testicles against my buttocks. His hand jacked my cock fiercely, causing an inordinately abundant and forceful climax. The strange sound of a moan combined with a muted laugh came from his mouth as my heat-thinned jissom peppered his face.

Carefully pulling his cock out, he collapsed on top of me. "And that, my sweet lover, was not the load of a sixty-two-year-old," he whispered, wiping my semen from his face and chest. "Only young studs hit the ceiling with their cum; old men

aren't supposed to."

For just over thirty minutes, we half-slept in each other's arms until Eldon broke the silence.

"I know how bored you must be," he said softly.

I said nothing and waited for his next line. *Yes*, I wanted to say, *I'm bored. Now what are we to do about it?*

"I've thought some things over, and I think I'm going to take you on some of my longer trips."

I was pleasantly surprised.

"When I travel with my salesmen and engineers, I'll just make them travel separate and stay in a different motel."

"What will they think?" I asked lazily.

"Who gives a damn? I sign their goddamn paychecks."

"They might start nasty rumors," I offered, chuckling.

"Then I'll fire their asses." He laughed. "Seriously, I just never thought of it. Hell, I can afford it with all this new business."

"Correction," I interjected. "*I* can afford it. I'm too old and loaded to be kept."

"Loaded?"

I wanted to bite my tongue. "Okay, *financially comfortable*. So where are we going?" I said, trying to get him off the subject. "Frankly, I *am* bored, and I'd like to get out of here once in a while."

Eldon propped his head up with his hand and rubbed my chest. "I know how you feel. Down the road it'll be different. Just be patient."

I cringed because I knew that Eldon was planning our relationship around Ruth's demise. I so wanted to tell Eldon of sons who grew old and died while waiting for their walking-dead mothers to succumb. I wanted to tell him that Ruth knew the whole story. I wanted to say that the image of her lying awake in bed, knowing her husband was making love upstairs, would soon haunt me and exact its toll.

"Next week, I'll take you to Salt Lake City for two days," he said, patting my belly. "Then the week after, we're going to a convention—just the two of us—in Houston."

Thursday, July 26

After we'd returned from Salt Lake City, Eldon was called away to Tucson because of a construction accident. Gretchen then reminded me that Eldon had promised to take us all to the desert for an outing. Feeling magnanimous, I loaded Gretchen, Ruth and Paulita into my van and drove them to Joshua Tree National Monument the following morning.

I found a secluded spot on high ground near an unusual rock formation and a sidewalk-accessed rest room for Ruth's sake. Leveling the van and extending the built-in awning and pull-out serving table, I fetched three folding chairs from the back. Paulita unveiled a luscious basket lunch, complete with Chinese chicken salad, cold roast beef and an assortment of fresh fruits.

Ruth appeared very happy and, although she didn't talk much, she seemed genuinely amused with all the bantering. At other times, she gazed out over the expanse of Joshua trees and massive rocks with a serenity I couldn't fathom. I wondered if such an air was reserved only for those who were facing death.

"So how was Salt Lake City?" asked Gretchen.

"Great. I had no idea it was such a big city. Got to hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Lordy, what a pipe organ they have there."

Gretchen didn't seem to be listening to me. "K.O. and I stayed there once on our way from San Francisco to Minneapolis. It was hot as hell driving across that desert, but it actually snowed in the mountains on the way to Wyoming."

K.O.? I wondered who K.O. was.

Ruth frowned. "Wyoming. Eldon and I used to spend time in Wyoming. A place called Big Piney—or should I say, 'Armpit.'"

I was surprised at her sudden talkativeness, and I'm sure the other women were, too. Knowing that she was about to go on, I made a mental note to find out about K.O.

"Eldon had some jobs up there in the gas fields," Ruth continued. "I thought the altitude would kill me. We had to stay in this . . . this *dump* in Big Piney, and he would have to drive way up into the hills to the jobsite. Open range everywhere. Cattle everywhere. Ugly-looking men with cowboy hats and boots, driving big pick-ups with shotguns in the back window and dogs in the truck beds—everywhere!"

Gretchen and I laughed and rejoiced over her enthusiasm. Even Paulita appeared to be pleasantly surprised.

"Now they wear ball caps and have long hair. Just as ugly, though," I offered.

"Oil patch scum," said Ruth. "Probably the same ones. As a matter of fact, many had Texas tags on their trucks." She smiled and seemed to be taken back several years. "Eldon and I were so young then. I followed him to all these godawful construction sites before he started his own business. I even went with him once to Alaska!"

"I'll bet you lived in mobile homes a lot," I guessed.

"And worse!" She paused, seemingly to make a decision to go on. "Then, when the twins came, I stayed behind more. It was about that time that Eldon started his own company—for the sake of his growing family."

Paulita appeared upset and excused herself to go to the rest room.

Ruth sighed. "Actually, Eldon and I weren't getting along all that well before Timmy and Jimmy came along. And when they did, it completely changed him." She backed her wheelchair away from the advancing sunlight. "He was such a good father. He wanted so much for them. And he had no qualms about showing affection to them." She reflected for a moment. "His father hadn't been that affectionate, and he wanted to do it right."

"What kind of boys were they?" asked Gretchen, apparently intent upon getting Ruth to tell everything.

I watched for a negative reaction or a balk but was relieved to see none.

"They were identical and looked exactly like their father. It was disgusting!" She laughed.

I looked at Gretchen and felt sure that she was just as enchanted as I.

"He used to embarrass me something awful when he helped me bathe them. They were . . . well . . . very well developed, if you know what I mean, and he would insist that they were destined to be 'studs' like him."

I howled, prompting Gretchen to laugh as she realized that I knew first hand.

"And, of course, they had to be athletic," Ruth continued. "He enrolled them in peewee football and Little League and gave them swimming . . . swimming lessons . . ." She trailed off.

"Say, what mountain is that?" Gretchen nervously offered a new subject. "San Gorgonio?"

Ruth continued with determination. "Of course, they were close. It was so eerie how they could communicate

psychically. And, of course, that's what caused both of them to drown." She was silent for several seconds and watched Paulita strolling among the cactus and Joshua trees. She continued very softly. "They'd just turned eleven, and we were in Hawaii on vacation. Eldon stayed behind to handle loose ends and was to have met us the next day." She paused again, the memory obviously very painful. "They begged me to let them go out on this fishing boat that fished some reefs only about one hundred yards out. This freak wave . . . this freak wave came up and capsized the boat against the reef and . . . and only Tim made it back to shore."

"It's okay, Ruth," I said. "Don't . . . "

She held up her hand to silence me. "When he saw that Jimmy wasn't there, he swam back out to find him."

For an agonizing few seconds there was complete silence. Then it became apparent that Ruth's monolog had ended. She gazed out over the valley and said very little the rest of the afternoon.

Shortly before leaving, Paulita took Ruth to the rest room, leaving Gretchen and me to talk.

She offered me more chicken salad, which I declined. "Can you imagine the effect the loss of the boys had on them?"

I nodded sadly. "I'm surprised they're still together."

"Makes my problems pale in comparison." She chuckled sadly.

"Mine, too." I studied her and realized that I wanted to get even closer to her. She fascinated me. "How did you get the name 'Gretchen?'"

"I wondered when someone besides Ruth would ask me that."

"Well, it's not a black name, normally."

She shrugged. "Oh, I got off pretty well, compared to my sisters, Elwanda, Odessa and Juniper."

I couldn't help but laugh.

She looked at me with fondness, and I sensed that the desire to get closer was mutual. "He's very much in love with you, isn't he?"

I was surprised at the sudden frankness. "It appears so, but I'm not too thrilled about being involved with a married man."

"So, how long will he be married?"

"You sound as if Ruth's dying," I said, glancing toward the toilet.

Gretchen looked at me gravely. "She is."

I was shocked. "She is?"

"Her heart is getting weaker and the medication isn't working. But worse than that, the cancer's spread to the remaining lung and her liver."

"Does Eldon know?"

"I doubt it."

"Then I'll tell him," I said vacantly, staring at the serenity in Ruth's face as Paulita wheeled her back.

Friday, August 3

It felt strange being in Houston again. I'd just dropped Eldon off at the convention center near the Astrodome and found myself inside a rented Cadillac with five hours to kill.

Of course, I immediately drove to the arcade, but found it closed.

Parked in the empty lot, I closed my eyes and willed myself back to the motel room with Jerry. I thought of the bizarre encounter, the memory of which became so vivid that I could almost taste Jerry's semen again. Houston's repressively humid August heat closed in on me, making me sweat, bringing back the memory of oozing perspiration, saliva and jissom. Loath to open up the wounds again, I aimlessly drove east until my hands began to shake. Unable to control my renewed obsession, I did a U-turn and drove toward Quintero Court.

I slowly passed Jerry's house, which appeared unoccupied. At once relieved and disappointed, I headed back toward the freeway, only to encounter a maroon Electra going in the opposite direction. With quickened pulse, I drove around the block and returned to Jerry's house just as his wife dropped him off and drove on.

Parking the car directly across the street, I stared at the house as a mixture of dread and cock-throbbing excitement crept over me. Locked back inside my obsession, I wondered where it would lead. How far would I go this time? I felt powerless to stop myself.

Minutes later, the front drapes opened and Jerry walked by in running shorts. Shortly thereafter, I heard the sound of a gas-driven lawn mower from behind a redwood fence too high to see over.

I got out of the car and approached what looked like a gate without a handle. Looking through the cracks, I saw that the gate was secured with a simple latch. *Get inside the goddamn car and drive away, you stupid jerk!* A war began inside me. *Do it! Go inside! Ravish him! Catharsis!* I picked up a small branch from a nearby pine tree and stuck it through the crack, unlatching the gate. And then he was only yards away from me, mowing the lawn, oblivious to my presence.

I quietly latched the gate behind me and beheld him. He looked good. His body was still the same: well muscled, bearish, awesome. I looked to see if the yard was private and found that a perimeter of pines obstructed the view from those adjacent houses with second-story bedrooms.

He reached the far end of the lawn then turned and started back toward me. Spotting me as he reached the center of the yard, he stopped and stared in disbelief as I strode to him and shut off the machine with my foot.

I looked at him hungrily and smiled, disarming him more. He opened his mouth to say something, but the words never came out.

Stepping closer, I touched his right nipple, sending rippling spasms across his chest.

"Where did she go?" I asked breathlessly.

"Back to work." His voice was hoarse and thin.

I licked his salty breasts and caressed his muscular back and buttocks, feeling them tighten and quiver. I pulled down his flimsy running shorts and watched as his fat penis began to swell.

Jerry found his voice. "I must bring out the monster in you," he said as his scrotum tightened and blood filled his penis to bloated hardness.

"Yes," I hissed, squatting and sliding the pulsating cock carefully down my throat.

As the sun came out hot from behind a cloud, he pushed me away and watched in fascination as his wet cock glistened in the sunlight. I met his gaze and couldn't find the revulsion and fear that I'd encountered before. I was now looking into the eyes of a man in complete control.

He pulled me up to my feet and roughly unbuttoned my shirt, popping off two buttons. Unzipping my fly, he roughly pulled down my trousers and underwear and studied my ample, equally hard cock. He kneeled and stared at it.

Amazed, I could only watch his eyes follow my cock as it swayed up and down. Realizing that I had liberated his

bisexuality much more than previously thought, I traced the outline of his lips with my cock, leaving a gloss of precum. His lips slightly parted, and I prodded them gently until they parted more. Slipping my cockhead inside his mouth, I could sense an acute tension and saw an element of fear coming to his eyes. I backed away until the tension passed, then tried it again. The tension returned, but it was less intense. Again I pulled back. Upon the third attempt, Jerry allowed my cock to remain inside his unresponsive mouth for several seconds.

Not wanting to go further, I pulled away and urged him to his feet. But just as my knees buckled to kneel again, he ushered me to a chaise longue atop a wooden deck. Gently forcing me to lie down, he took my cock inside his mouth again and allowed his tongue to glide around my shaft. He stopped and looked up at me. "You won't come inside . . . "

I smiled. "I won't. Promise."

He resumed sucking my cock in earnest. He moaned and writhed. And then it occurred to me that he was about to shoot.

Pulling away from me, he grabbed his cock and squeezed. "I don't think I can . . . " He pounced upward, straddling my neck and breaking the legs on the chaise. He rammed his penis into my mouth repeatedly; his leg, arm, chest and abdominal muscles flexed and trembled. As he ejaculated, several of his joints popped and his eyes rolled up in their sockets, his lids fluttering.

I masturbated fiercely until thick, opaque semen gushed outward, covering my hand and balls.

Jerry collapsed on the deck, breathing heavily.

I stood over him, examining him, desiring him again. He looked sober, and the exhausted smile on his face confirmed that I wasn't the monster I thought I was. I looked within myself and sensed that the guilt had been purged. My only regret at the moment was that it had all happened too fast.

I spotted a hose and faucet and washed my groin. "Do you still feel fucked up?"

"No," he answered without hesitation, his eyes closed.

"You know," I started, trying to catch my breath. "You do bring out the monster in me."

"It works both ways," said Jerry, shielding his eyes and squinting at me.

"Will you be all right?"

"Oh, yeah," he said cheerfully. "I'm sober again and I think I have a job offer coming soon." He closed his eyes again. "I'll be all right . . . provided you're not within a hundred miles."

"You were my responsibility," I explained. "I had to come back to see if you'd make it. And I had to have you one last time."

He smiled. "I'll make it. I've faced the demon, thanks to you. I'll never forget you."

I dried myself off with a towel from another chaise longue and got back into my clothes. Dressed, I knelt over Jerry and kissed him on the lips. "Nor will I ever forget you, Jerry."

I walked to the gate and never looked back.

After returning to Riverside, I superseded my North Carolina will with a California version that generously provided for *Mature Men* Magazine, Eldon and Jerry in case of my demise.

SEVEN

K.O.

Tuesday, August 14

Eldon had flown to Salt Lake City on business, and the three women had gone shopping. Knowing that I would have sole possession of the house for at least four hours, I swam in the nude, then got out and fell asleep on a beach towel at the edge of the pool.

I walked through a lush, exotic jungle with Eldon. Finding a clearing, we lay on soft grass, and I began to devour Eldon's cock. I felt a strange sensation in my groin and glanced down to find Jerry, wetly sucking my cock.

"Anybody home?" I heard someone say from another dimension. "Excuse me!"

I awakened and noticed a muscular, fortyish black man standing nearby, just inside the patio. My nudity had obviously taken him by surprise.

I looked down at my semi-erect penis and glanced up sheepishly, lying on my side in such a way as to hide my shrinking cock. "I'm a nudist," I said vapidly. "Uhh . . . aren't you in the wrong house?"

The man absently pushed up on his wire frame glasses and nervously cleared his throat. "Uh, I thought Gretchen worked here. I'm her hus . . . uh . . . husband."

I squinted at him, shielding my eyes from the sun. "Husband?" *Gee, I thought that Sylvia was her husband*, I nearly said. "Could you hand me my shorts?" I gestured toward a pair of blue walking shorts draped over a chair at the patio table.

He turned and fetched the shorts then brought them to me, obviously still embarrassed. Up close, I saw that he had rich, milk chocolate skin and distinguished-looking, greying sideburns. His eyes were the color of greenish-gold star sapphires, and he was wearing an exotic cologne which beautifully combined with his own body chemistry. *What a turn on!* I thought.

"Is she here?"

I stood up and put on my shorts. "No."

"Uh . . . I knocked on the door and it just opened. I guess I shouldn't have just walked in. See, I thought that maybe she was here and was avoiding me."

I sat at the table and invited him to join me. "Coffee? A drink?"

"No, thanks. Uh . . . are you having a drink?"

"Sure," I said, slipping into the kitchen through the sliding screen door. "I'll have one. Are you and Gretchen having a fight?"

"We're separated."

"Oh," I said from the kitchen, filling glasses with ice and opening up the liquor cabinet. "What's your poison?"

"Do you have Bourbon and mineral water?"

"Coming up."

I made the drinks and returned to the table. He reached for his and took a big gulp with shaky hands. Since shakiness sometimes meant a drinking problem, I was concerned.

He lifted his glass. "To divorce."

"To divorce," I toasted. "I guess it's safe to assume that your visit isn't a gesture of reconciliation."

"It is on my part, but probably not her's. Oh, I'm sorry." He shook his head and extended his hand. "My name's Ken

Porter. My middle name is Oliver, so they call me K.O."

I smiled. *So you're K.O.,* I thought. "Hi, K.O." I shook his hand firmly, receiving a surge of chemistry and electricity. "My name's Barney Wilkinson."

"Glad to meet you, Barney. You live here?"

"Temporarily."

"You married?"

"My wife died recently."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"I'm not."

K.O. studied me. "You have a girl friend?"

"Nope."

He studied me more intently, his expression darkening. "Just passing through?"

I laughed. "I'm not involved with Gretchen. I'm a friend of Eldon's . . . and Ruth's."

"Oh . . . Jeez, I can't believe me sometimes. I'm so fucking jealous." He looked embarrassed again. "The stupid part is the reason we split up."

"What's that?"

"You know women nowadays. She joined one of those militant women's organizations and suddenly I was a wart hog. All this shit about not being tender and loving . . . " He smirked. "But I found out another reason from someone else, and it fucking blew my mind."

"What?"

"Promise not to laugh?"

I nodded again.

"She claimed I was too big for her."

I smiled slightly, wondering if I'd heard correctly. "Run that by me again."

"My dick. She claims that it's too big for her and that I've done permanent damage."

I squirmed as my skin began to get goose bumps. "Hhh . . . how . . . big is it?" I cleared my suddenly constricted throat.

"Hell, I don't know. I never measured it. But she says it's too big."

I surveyed his crotch, which indicated nary a bump. "Never were in the service?"

He shook his head.

I chuckled. "And you never had some guy pee on you in the john while he was staring at your cock?"

"Nope. Damn thing's a worm on soft."

"I see." I took a big gulp from my drink.

"Hell, I could cut down on the sex. But she never gave me a chance. The bitch neighbor's the one who told me."

"You live nearby?" I asked, hoping.

"Jesus no. I'm still in the house in Inglewood. She moved out about two months ago. According to my neighbor, she moved in with some guy in Fontana. But they had a fight and she quit her job and moved here."

"What do you do in Inglewood?" I'd heard about the city between LAX and south-central L.A. on the local news. It was a middle-class, mostly black community that was being plagued by mounting gang violence.

"I'm a high school football coach. Gates High on the north side."

I smiled and gazed at his muscular arms. "I thought you looked rather athletic. You look like you're in pretty good shape."

"I work out. That, plus I don't ask a student to do more than I can do. I match 'em step for step and they respect that. I'm rough on them *and* myself."

"Is that a winning formula?"

He grinned. "Damn right. We won the division last year. We're getting ready now for our best year ever. Soon we'll go into two-a-day drills before the season starts."

I was impressed. "Gretchen will be back in a couple of hours. How about some lunch?"

He looked down into his drink. "No, thanks. I think I'll just drink for awhile." He looked at the pool. "Hell, I might even take a dip, only I didn't bring a suit."

"Who needs a suit?" I took off my shorts and fetched two inflated rafts from a utility shed. I threw them into the pool and retrieved my drink, then eased into the pool and onto one of the rafts. I smiled back at him.

A playful look appeared on his face, and he took off his shoes. He stood up and began disrobing, looking around shyly. "Why not?"

As he pushed down his shorts and self-consciously pulled at his small penis, I floated on the lilting water, staring hungrily at his well-defined, powerful body. His skin color wasn't merely brown. It was a brilliant combination of sienna, burnt umber, ebony and dark amber.

He gingerly slid into the pool with his drink and clumsily climbed onto the other raft. His penis became even smaller. "I wish I had plumbing like you."

I was surprised by his remark. "Why?"

"Your dick is big on soft. Mine has to have two quarts of blood to get big." He laughed. "They used to call me 'Nodickus' in P.E. back in high school. Then, when I got my first piece of ass, the little bitch blabbed it all over and they started calling me 'King Kong.'"

I dropped my Scotch into the pool.

We consumed seven drinks apiece and whiled away the afternoon having water fights and racing the length of the pool underwater. Several times, I playfully goosed him on the buttocks and once grabbed his testicles, but he never got remotely aroused.

Tired and pretty much wiped out on alcohol, both of us fell asleep on the rafts.

Paulita's screams sent us both diving for cover into the pool. Surfacing, I looked in horror and embarrassment at the expressions on the three women. A horrified Gretchen stared at K.O., her mouth agape. Ruth was looking at me with a wide grin. She began to laugh and wheeled herself back inside the house with a very upset Paulita close behind.

Gretchen sat in a patio chair and seemed to be trying to compose herself.

"Howdy," greeted K.O. lamely.

I thought I saw the hint of an urge to laugh, but it never materialized. "Why are you here?" she asked, now without a shred of humor.

"I didn't know you were married, Gretch," I piped, still light-headed.

She ignored me. "Who told you where I was? Was it Meriam?"

K.O. nodded. "Yep. She blabbed everything you told her. I think she wanted me to fuck her with the big dick you told her about . . . . I came to bring you back home."

"No way."

"Come back home. I need you."

She gestured toward the house. "She needs me. You don't."

"I'll do better," he said, his voice almost cracking with

emotion.

"You're never going to change, K.O."

"People can change, Gretchen." He got off the raft and swam to the edge of the pool near her.

"K.O., I . . . " She hesitated. "I just don't love you any more."

I couldn't see his face, but I saw his head tilt forward in obvious pain. He exhaled a trembling sigh that tore through me. After an agonizing pause, he lifted himself out of the pool with rippling arms.

I watched in profound sorrow as he slipped into his clothes and left without saying another word.

Gretchen's eyes misted over, but I had the feeling that she had no intention of crying in front of me. She picked up my shorts and took them to the side of the pool. "I'll get you something for that sunburn," she said flatly.

And then I realized that I'd been badly burned by the sun in all the wrong places.

Thursday, August 16

As I drove around the high school the second time, I noticed a small group of young black men hanging out on a corner. They were staring at me, and I wondered if they were making plans to stop me the third time around. Realizing that it would be imprudent to hesitate any longer, I drove into a driveway that led to the practice field and parked in a space marked "staff."

I got out and walked to the football practice field, where I could see various groups practicing separately, each supervised by an assistant coach. As I reached the perimeter of the track around the field, I saw K.O. talking to a player on the far sideline. Noticing a small bleachers section directly behind me, I climbed halfway up and sat down.

K.O. wore a T-shirt shirt with shorts and was talking animatedly to the player—the starting quarterback, I guessed. K.O. held a football and dropped back as if to pass it, then stopped and explained the moves he'd made. He gave the ball to the player and had him do the same thing. Eventually he clapped his hands and blew the whistle on a chain around his neck.

The small groups then combined into two groups and began practicing plays at either end of the field. I caught K.O.'s attention and waved. The coach squinted then recognized me and waved, smiling broadly.

I sat for another half hour as K.O. put his players through their paces, ending with several laps around the track. As I'd anticipated, he ran with them. During the final lap, he blew the whistle again, and all the players picked up the pace. Then, as they ran back to the main building, K.O. pulled up in front of the bleachers, sweating profusely but hardly out of breath.

"Goddamn, you're in shape," I said, joining him.

"How's your sunburn?"

We both laughed.

"So what brings you to these parts?"

"Oh, no reason in particular," I said. "I was on my way back from the airport and thought I'd try to catch your act," I lied.

"How's Gretchen?" He looked misty-eyed.

"She's fine."

"She talk to you?"

"A little."

He turned to look at the remaining players and coaches entering the field house. "Let me go finish things up." He turned and smiled. "Then I'll take you to my place and cook us up some grub."

I followed K.O.'s Ford Bronco to a neat, three-bedroom house, less than a mile away. He was not the best housekeeper, but it appeared that someone was at least trying. After showering and dressing in just a robe, K.O. broiled a couple of steaks. We dined on the steaks, salads and some very good California Cabernet Sauvignon. Afterward we retired to a patio and began sipping Spanish brandy. K.O. smoked a cigar. It began to get dark.

I could no longer distinguish K.O.'s facial expressions; he began to blend in with the darkening shadows.

"You getting cold?" he asked.

"Not yet. It's exhilarating." I looked down at his crotch and could faintly see that the robe was undone. "How about you?"

"The same. It's nice out."

"You say that Gretchen's been gone for over two months?" I asked, feeling a powerful urge to lay my head in his lap.

"Yeah. I heard that she moved in with some guy in Fontana, but I guess he must have kicked her out. I swear I don't know why she doesn't come back now. Shit, I wasn't that bad. I mean, I don't get drunk . . . and I've never touched another woman. What does she want?"

We lapsed into a short period of silence.

"Any kids?" I asked, breaking the spell.

"She didn't want any. That was another bone of contention."

"How do you know that she moved in with a guy?"

He paused, then shrugged. "I don't know. Who else?" He thought about it. "A woman? Shit. She never had any close single women friends. What? Did she answer an ad, you suppose?"

"No, I was wondering if . . . "

"Oh, you mean a lesbian relationship? Lots of people probably wondered that—even me, at one time. I mean, she ain't no dainty, that's for sure." He took a sip of brandy and a puff from his cigar. The glow of the embers faintly illuminated his face. "If she had a lesbian relationship, I could live with it. I could live with that. But a guy? No way."

"What do you mean, 'live with it'?"

"Oh, I guess I mean that I could share her with another woman if I had to." He chuckled. "Hell, one of the best turn-ons for me is watching two women in a sixty-nine." He reflected a moment. "Sure, I could share her that way. Isn't that the whole thing in a nutshell? I don't give her the tenderness or give her enough foreplay? Maybe a woman can give all that to her."

"Why can't *you* give her that?"

"Maybe the tenderness would be possible, but it's the other thing . . . "

"What?"

"Well, I have a hang-up." He took another sip. "I . . . I can't handle going down on her. That's what she wants, but I can't fucking do it. And if that ain't the pits, I would really like her to do it to me, but it's too big."

"So, if the two of you could find a woman to round things out, you could live with that, huh?" I summarized.

"Sure. Sounds weird, huh?"

"Hardly. So you aren't down on gay people?"

"Never have been. What two people do in private is their own business."

I swallowed with difficulty. "Uh . . . "

"What?"

"Uh . . . have you ever made it with a man?"

"What do you mean by 'made it'?"

My throat constricted, and I began to tremble with desire for him. "Have . . . have you ever been, you know . . . blown?"

He laughed. "Shit, man, with a dick this small, no one ever gave me a second look. Hell, I take a shower with one of my assistants, who I know is gay, and he looks right through me."

"I find that hard to believe," I said, almost choking on the words.

"Why?" He took another sip and puff, which illuminated a puzzled expression.

"Couldn't they see the man? Hell, I couldn't keep my eyes off you there in the pool."

He shifted his weight. *Or did he squirm?*

"K.O., please don't take this as being disrespectful, but . . . " I stood up and walked to him, kneeling in front of him.

He placed his glass on the table and puffed strongly, nervously, illuminating the faint outline of his inflating penis.

" . . . but there is a time to act, even if it gets you a black eye." I spread away the robe and slipped both dental plates inside my shirt. I held my mouth just a fraction of an inch away from the rising penis and exhaled on it, causing K.O. to shudder.

"I always wanted someone to do this, but I'll be damned if I ever thought it would be a man. And a *white* man at that! In my wildest dreams I never thought I'd give my cherry to a man."

"I think you'd better fasten your seat belt, K.O."

With that, K.O.'s cock lurched and collided with my right eye, leaving a drop of drool on my eyelid. I licked the head and consumed another drop, then exhaled on the still growing organ.

I slipped my arms around his waist and buried my face in his sparse, curly pubic hair, inhaling his essence. His cock throbbed against my face and I could feel the entire length of it from my forehead to my collar bone. I licked my hot, dry lips and ran my tongue from the shaft to the leaking tip, then finally went down on the entire length.

"Goddamn!" he almost yelled. He bit through his cigar, frantically brushing it off his chest.

"Holy shit," he whispered, grinding his hips.

I fluidly fell and rose until I felt him start to tense. Quickening the pace, I slapped my face against his groin and I took it all without so much as a hint of gagging. He grabbed my shoulders and began to shake and wheeze; I felt his urethra swell and spasm, signalling ejaculation. Taking a deep breath, I buried my face in his groin, then felt a stream of jissom spray against the back of my throat, followed by another, then another. He grabbed my head and locked his muscular legs around my neck, sliding down into the chair until his head rested on the seat. The chair tipped over, and both of us lay on our sides as his cock continued to pump. I wildly unzipped my own trousers and pulled out my primed cock just as it released its bounty. As I muted a shout of joy with his crotch, my load became airborne.

After showering, I dressed in my semen-stained clothes and waited quietly in the living room for K.O. to finish showering in another bathroom. I dreaded facing him, fearful that he would have a guilt reaction.

Soon he entered the room, again dressed in the same robe. He stood in the middle of the room and sighed.

I pretended to yawn. "Well, I guess I'd better run along."

"What's your hurry?" He smiled. "And what's that worried look for?" He chuckled and sat in a nearby chair. "Goddamn, man, you tore me a new one. Where'd you learn to suck dick like that?"

I was so relieved that I almost wept. "I don't know. I certainly haven't had that much experience. I think the secret is desire. If you want to do it badly enough, it'll come naturally."

He seemed to take what I said very seriously. "More brandy?"

"Why not?" With Eldon gone, I knew that I wouldn't be missed until the next morning.

"You want to spend the night?" he asked, rising to make the drinks. "You've got something you want to tell me about Gretchen, and I think I want seconds on that mouth of yours."

I was elated and shocked, but managed to follow him into the kitchen. "Gretchen first?"

"Lay it on me," he said, pouring brandy into snifters.

"It's not a man," I said without hesitation. "It *is* a woman, and she kicked Gretchen out. Tore her up pretty bad." I took the extended glass and took a sip. "Want my advice?"

Without showing any reaction to what I'd said, K.O. calmly took a gulp from his drink and returned to the living room with me close behind. "Shoot."

"Give her the middle ground. Tell her you understand her lesbianism—that you want to learn to satisfy her as much as you can. Give her free reign. Hell, blow her mind and tell her you got it on with me!"

He stopped and looked around at me, a wry smile on his face. He nodded and continued to the sofa, gesturing for me to sit next to him. We sat in silence, then he opened his mouth to say something, only to close it and shake his head.

"Yes?" I prodded with the inflection of a sinister butler answering the proverbial creaky door.

"I'm a crazy fucker, you know? I can go for years, convinced I can't do something and then,*boom*, I suddenly do it, just for kicks." He studied me, no doubt knowing from my expression that I had no idea what he was getting to. "You know how I do it?"

I shook my head dumbly.

"I go *past* it and then back up to it and *do* it." He sipped from his glass and smiled. "Okay . . . this: you're afraid of heights, so you take up hang gliding. Or, you're afraid to drive in snow, so you drive like a crazed motherfucker in a demolition derby on a frozen lake—whatever."

"What in the hell are you trying to say?" My curiosity was aroused.

"This aversion I have to eating pussy. I just figured out how I can overcome it."

"How?" I asked, thoroughly unprepared for the answer.

"By sucking your cock tonight."

Friday, August 31

I knew that Ruth was not feeling well, so I offered to take her out into the sunshine. Gretchen took advantage of the break to go to a medical supply store to get more bandages for Ruth's drainage.

I gently pushed her through the patio and around the garage to the driveway.

"Where're you taking me, mister?" she asked dryly.

I chuckled. "The scenic route. What did the doctor say yesterday?"

"The same old crap. God forbid that they should come across as human, so they end up being too clinical." She

sighed. "I have a paper-thin heart, one lung with a new tumor, a malignant liver . . . and I'm losing too much blood through a permanent hole in my back. It's a miracle I'm still alive, much less alive with a sense of humor."

"Does Eldon know?"

"Oh, I think poor Eldon has reached a saturation point with all this. It's tearing him to pieces because he feels so helpless." She patted my hand. "You love him now, don't you?"

I smiled. "Always have."

"But you didn't make the real commitment until recently. I could tell when it happened."

"You could, huh?" I said teasingly.

"When you came back from Houston, I got the impression that you'd resolved something very important."

I was no longer surprised at her keen perception. "Nothing gets by you."

"Did you ever tell Eldon that I knew about your relationship?"

We neared the sidewalk and I hesitated. "No need to do it. He's got enough on his mind. He's reached a saturation point with his company, too. I think he wants me to come out of retirement and help out." I decided to push her down the sidewalk and proceeded to do so.

She reflected for several seconds, then shuddered, closing her blouse at the neck.

"Cold?"

She shook her head. "It's fear." She glanced back toward me. "It's like a swirl of mist, and it sort of seeks out people like me. You get a whiff of it and suddenly you can see that blinding tunnel to the other side." She laughed bravely but unconvincingly. "I'm a little bit afraid to die . . . but not nearly as much as before you came."

"Why?" I was growing depressed over the reality of her slipping away.

"I didn't want to leave Eldon alone."

I reached down and squeezed her shoulder, which elicited a pat on my hand.

"I feel confident that you'll stay with him now."

"I will."

"Promise me you will."

"I promise," I said softly, tears beginning to well in my eyes.

She sighed as if profoundly relieved. She said no more until I wheeled her back into her bedroom.

Gretchen was waiting with fresh bandages and a shot of morphine.

That night, I held Eldon in my arms and told him about Ruth's worsening condition and her knowledge of our relationship.

He mulled over what I'd said. From the look of his stoic expression, he'd certainly reached a saturation point.

"I promised her that I'd stay with you," I said at length. "She seemed relieved." I ran my fingers through his hair. "I'm concerned that she was holding on just for that promise. "

He slowly faced me.

"She's close, Eldon."

Eldon pondered, nodded. He kissed me and got out of bed. "I'm going down to hold her for awhile."

He put on his robe and quietly went downstairs.

The following morning, I was awakened by Eldon's slow footfalls on the stairway. I sat up in bed and looked toward the door as the knob turned, then stopped. "Eldon?" I heard a choking sound and ran to the door, opening it.

Eldon was leaning against the doorway, his eyes puffy and red. "When I woke up, she was cold."

Paulita's shrieks pierced the dead silence.

October 8, 1984

Gretchen and K.O. got back together the day after Ruth's funeral, and K.O. credited me for pulling it off. He told her all that had happened between us and took her home without a protest. Gretchen had secretly found a woman who could round out her life, and K.O. promised to seek me out those days when the woman came by.

Paulita quit and moved to Mexico.

I never told Eldon about my affair with K.O., who seemed to fulfill most of my fantasies. However, I made no mistake about who K.O. loved, and I never allowed myself to get emotionally involved. Besides, Eldon fulfilled that spiritual need for me, and my incredible libido was able to accommodate his moderate demands. I was like K.O. in that I loved Eldon, but I was also like Gretchen in that I had to have that extra something that was missing from my life.

Eldon's business had continued to thrive, and he reluctantly decided to expand, which necessitated a move into larger offices. The seven million dollar job in Tucson had grown to sixty million, and his bids had been accepted for jobs in Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico. I was coerced to "temporarily" come out of retirement long enough to play personnel manager and find him 200 new employees—a monstrous job even with the help of a staff of four. I placed ads in every California paper, as well as those in Seattle, Dallas and Houston, where the construction industry was especially depressed. The Houston ad alone had generated over six hundred replies, so my staff and I found ourselves inundated with paper.

That morning Eldon and I sat in his office, discussing plans for accommodating the new business. As I was putting forth an idea on field administration, Eldon's attention seemed to drift away. I assumed that he was thinking about Ruth.

"Eldon?"

He blinked. "Huh?"

"You okay?"

He smiled. "You know, I'm not sad any more. The grief is there, of course, but I'm so happy that her suffering is over. But her death taught me something."

"What?"

Eldon gently grabbed my chin and held my gaze. "What in the *fuck* are we doing?"

I shrugged. "Damned if I know. I'm just trying to stay up with you."

He looked like he'd just thought of something profound. "You know what we need? A *partner*." He stood up and paced.

"A partner," I repeated, wondering if he was serious.

"A partner. Someone who can help us with the business. And, ideally, someone we could sandwich."

I was dumbfounded.

"I don't ever want us to get stale. More than that, if something were to happen to one of us, I wouldn't want the other to have to go it alone." He sat and looked at me seriously. "You were there when Ruth died. You made it bearable. I had a reason to go on living."

I was slightly irritated. "Eldon, you can't just . . . "

"I don't mean a lover necessarily. Maybe it could be a good friend we're both attracted to, like K.O., only single—someone we could teach the business to."

I looked at him suspiciously. "I didn't know you were attracted to K.O."

Eldon smiled, his eyes telling me lovingly that he knew.

"So where do we find this . . . this person, huh? Where?" I shook my head forlornly.

"Maybe it's just a fantasy." His telephone rang and he rolled up his eyes. "Now what?" He picked up the receiver. "Witherspoon," he answered gruffly. "Yeah . . . yeah . . . " He place his hand over the receiver. "I'm *not* getting tired of you, and I fully understand about you and K.O., so smile and realize that you married a wacko, okay?"

So thankful that I'd met him, I kissed him on the forehead and went back to my office.

After another long, frantic day with an inexperienced, new staff, I rubbed my eyes and glanced at the clock, which showed 8:30 pm. Eldon had left in the late afternoon for Utah and all the other employees had left at five. I stared at the stacks of résumés: one stack for further consideration, one for throwaway, and another for initial review. Then a name surfaced in my mind, and I thumbed through the "further consideration" stack until I found a résumé I'd read but not connected upon. I looked at the bottom and read:

Marital Status: Separated

I looked at the last employer and read:

Blackburn

It was the résumé of Jerry Boyd.

EIGHT

RUB-A-DUB-DUB

Friday, October 12

I sat in the darkened drafting area watching Jerry as he nervously waited in the reception area for Eldon to get off the phone. The receptionist had left long ago, as had the rest of the employees. At my insistence, Eldon had paid Jerry's way to Riverside for the interview and stayed late to accommodate the unemployed administration manager's delayed flight from Houston. Of course, Eldon was suspicious, so I merely told him that I knew Jerry and would explain it all later. The magic words were, "I think he might be the partner we want." Knowing that my presence at the interview would intimidate Jerry and probably Eldon, too, I pretended to leave the office.

Eldon got off the phone and greeted Jerry in the foyer. They shook hands, and Eldon escorted him to his office. It was eerie seeing them together like that. Two of the most desirable men I had ever met had just shaken each other's hand, and if things went according to plan, Jerry would be an employee. Maybe more. Cat-like, I moved to a dark spot just outside Eldon's glass-enclosed office. I positioned myself so as to view the expressions of both men and listened with a pounding, ambivalent heart.

Phantom laughter came from deep within me. *"You want all three, but you'll end up with none, fool."*

Good point. What did I want? All of it or none of it?

Eldon picked up Jerry's résumé and gestured for him to sit down. "Jerry Boyd," he read, looking up. "Name sounds familiar. Ever worked in Wyoming?"

"Nosir," said Jerry shyly, politely. It was obvious that he didn't want to blow the interview. "Colorado once, but not Wyoming."

"Let's see," continued Eldon. "Blackburn twelve years. Laid off . . . uh . . . almost four months?" He shook his head. "Not a very good place to be unemployed, huh?"

"Certainly isn't," mumbled Jerry.

Eldon went to the next block. "Separated."

Jerry cleared his throat. "It got too much for her, losing the house and all. I'm also an alcoholic . . . a, uhh . . . a recovering alcoholic."

Eldon held up his hand. "I don't care about that, Jerry, as long as you're sober now. A man's private life is of no concern to me as long as he does his job well."

Jerry smiled for the first time and seemed to relax somewhat.

"You've got some pretty impressive experience and education here," said Eldon. "Looks like you can wear any number of hats."

"I reckon so," drawled Jerry.

Eldon put the file down and leaned back in his chair, studying the younger man. "I'll be honest with you. When I first saw your résumé, I was impressed, but I figured I could find a good admin man in California. Then my partner insisted I talk to you. Even insisted I pay your way here for the interview—something I never do in today's business climate."

Jerry swallowed nervously, but I could detect a sort of resolve building in him. His expression clearly stated that he wanted this job and, by God, he was going to get it.

"Okay. For the next couple of hours, I want you to convince me that I should hire you to be our new administration manager." Eldon glanced down at the file. "You held admin positions with Blackburn on projects in, let's see, Colombia, Saudi Arabia, Colorado . . . " He looked up at Jerry. "But can you do it to suit me?" He stood up and walked to a small bar. "Mind if I have a drink while you talk?"

"Go right ahead," Jerry said, his voice much more confident.

Jerry talked for over an hour and a half, obviously charming Eldon, who had begun to get slightly high on the liquor. After Jerry's monolog, Eldon looked thoughtfully at him for a full fifteen or so seconds, making the Texan squirm.

Eldon tapped a pencil on Jerry's file and sighed. "Before I give you an offer I hope you can't refuse, I feel that I have to level with you about something. Quite frankly, my partner and I are lovers." He watched Jerry carefully. "Uh, my partner is a male, by the way."

Jerry's eyes widened. A smile almost came to his face, but it was obviously suppressed.

"Most of the employees around here have figured it out, I'm sure, but they respect us and figure they get a pretty good deal here. Does this cause you a problem?"

Jerry's elation was obviously harder to hide. "Uh . . . No. Not in the least."

"I assure you, there won't be any sexual harassment."

I almost fell off the drafting stool when Jerry said, "That's disappointing."

Both men stared at each other with lustful expressions.

"In that case," choked Eldon, "how about dinner tonight with me and my partner?"

Jerry beamed. "I'd love it."

Eldon picked up the phone and dialed. "Something tells me that you're the guy we've been looking for." He paused, then placed the receiver back on the cradle. "Fuck it, we'll surprise him."

Both men got up to leave, and I stepped further back into the shadows.

"You follow me. I'm in the silver Mercedes out in front," said Eldon. "The house isn't far."

They walked into the reception area and out of the building as Eldon turned off lights, armed the security system and locked the front entrance.

Carefully making my way through the darkened drafting area to the front, I watched as the two sets of tail lights disappeared down the street. I wondered if this was not unlike having one's cake and eating it, too. I laughed out loud and shivered at the thought of having them both—sexually and, if I was lucky, beyond. Granted, there was a remote possibility that Jerry would balk after he knew that *I* was involved, but I got the impression that he was desperate, that this was probably his last opportunity.

But my gut feeling was that Jerry would fit in. The radiant look on Eldon's face certainly told me that he wasn't going to be an obstacle. The timing seemed perfect for all of us, as if it was destined to happen. It was obvious to me that I would become the patriarch and that both Jerry and Eldon would let Big Daddy take it easy for a change and have his own way.

For sixty-two years, nothing. And, suddenly, utopia.

"Home, James," I whispered. "Rapture lies ahead."

Interrupting the alarm system and using my key to let myself out of the building, I walked to my van, which was parked out of sight around the corner. The autumn night was cool, and there was the aroma of a burning fireplace in the air. I made a mental note to have a fireplace installed at the house.

"And get a big-assed bearskin rug, too," I said with a wide grin.

I parked my van inside the garage between Jerry's rented car and Eldon's Mercedes, then entered the house with a powerful sense of expectancy. My groin tingled, and I felt giddy about surprising Jerry. My mouth watered over the thought of having them both with K.O. on the side. Countless fantasies assaulted me, and I felt a reeling sensation. "Heaven . . . . I'm in heaven . . . " I sang softly.

I walked into a house illuminated only by a small light in the kitchen and a night light near the front door. I stopped and listened carefully. A creak sounded from the master bedroom. As I walked in that direction, I heard the muffled sounds of vigorous sexual activity and rapid creaks from the bed frame. When I reached the closed door, I heard frantic, guttural sounds of delight. Slowly, I opened the door and peered toward the bed. The sounds became like that of pigs feeding, complete with grunts, growls and slurps. The smell of sweat and maleness assaulted me, and I watched stunned as bare skin glistened with light from another night light from the master bathroom.

I felt outraged as I hit the light switch hard, fully expecting them both to abruptly separate with guilty looks on their faces. But neither lost a stroke, and the sixty-nine coupling remained intact.

I loudly cleared my throat, but they ignored me. My ego bruised, I sat in a chair, studying the image of wanton passion. Deflated yet excited, I stripped and sat on the edge of the bed as the two men made love. I reached out and fondled Eldon's ass, then Jerry's, quickly pulling my hand back as they did a 360 degree roll.

The humor of the situation finally hit me, and I considered that they might be playing a trick on me. That enticing thought produced an ooze from my hardening cock and prompted me to fetch a condom and a dollop of Vaseline from a nightstand. My cock prepared for action, I hastily attempted to mount Jerry sideways. But as I probed his crevice, they did another turn away from me. I lunged at the writhing pair and began humping Eldon like a horny mongrel would a leg. Still, they ignored me.

Frustrated and angry again, I attempted in vain to pry them apart. The more I pushed and pulled, the more incensed I became. Winded, I threw my slick condom across the room and slid out of bed. I made my way to the kitchen while trembling with indignation and pulled a tub of ice cubes from the freezer. Charging back inside the bedroom, I hoisted the tub but hesitated as I realized that the light had been turned off. I turned it back on and stared dumbly at the empty bed. "What the fuck's going on?"

A hand grazed my neck and turned the light off again. Another hand groped me from behind the door and pushed me onto the bed. The ice cubes fell to the floor.

"You sons of bitches," I muttered breathlessly.

A warm mouth took my cock as a moist pair of buttocks pressed against my face. I could smell the familiar essence of Eldon's crotch, which was clean yet aromatic after twelve hours without a shower. As Eldon's cock demanded entry into my mouth, I dislodged my plates and dropped them to the floor.

While Eldon gently fucked my mouth, I lovingly caressed Jerry's face, slipping my forefinger inside his mouth to feel his tongue as it fluttered around my shank. I offered my thumb, and Jerry sucked alternately on both appendages.

Oddly, it occurred to me that perhaps I was only imagining what was happening. No words were spoken. I imagined it was like being deaf and having sex in pitch darkness. I wondered if it was tantamount to having sex while slipping into a black hole.

Eldon pulled out and changed positions. As Jerry sucked my cock, Eldon licked my balls. Sensing that I was about to have a premature climax, I tried to push them away, but neither would budge. "I'm coming!" I warned.

Both men grunted that they were ready.

I would remember it as the most explosive and premature climax of my life. Words can hardly describe the feeling I had. It was as if my brain had released an abundance of endorphin just as I zoomed off on the wildest roller coaster ride of all time. And as I lay gasping for breath, Jerry and Eldon resumed their sixty-nine, climaxing simultaneously within seconds, screaming in rapture into each other's crotch.

Then there was a coughing sound and Jerry slipped out of the room. I could hear him in a guest bathroom down the hall, gargling.

"Unlike you," said Eldon, "Jerry can't control his gag mechanism."

"He's probably never taken a load before."

"He'll get used to it."

"Loved your little trick," I said, reaching for him and drawing him near me.

"We jumped into bed when we heard you driving up."

"You almost got showered with ice cubes. Boy, was I pissed."

"Where did you find Jerry?"

"Later. It's a long, crazy story."

Jerry slipped back inside the bedroom. "Can I turn on the light?"

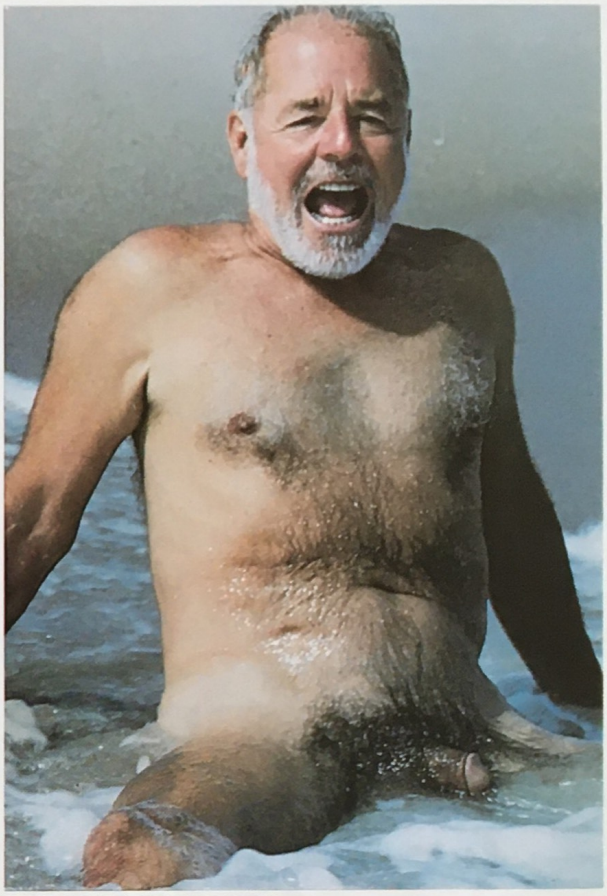
I sat up in bed and prepared myself for the worst.

"Sure, turn it on," said Eldon.

Jerry turned on the light and smiled sheepishly at Eldon. It was obvious that he was still having some problems accepting his new sexuality. No doubt in a quandary about what post-sex things to say and do around his new bosses, Jerry

(continued on page 35)

BOB THREE - photo by THUMPER



THOM - photo by JOEL

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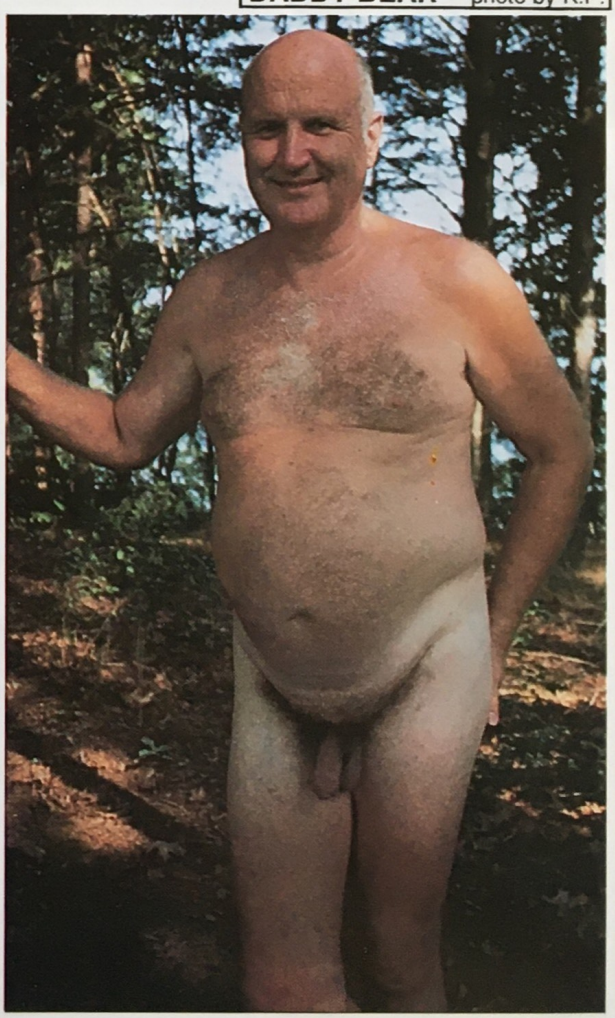

SPUD - photo by JOEL

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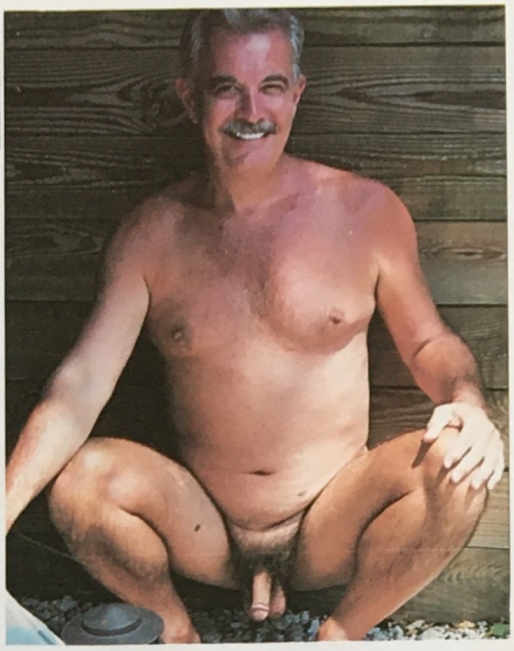

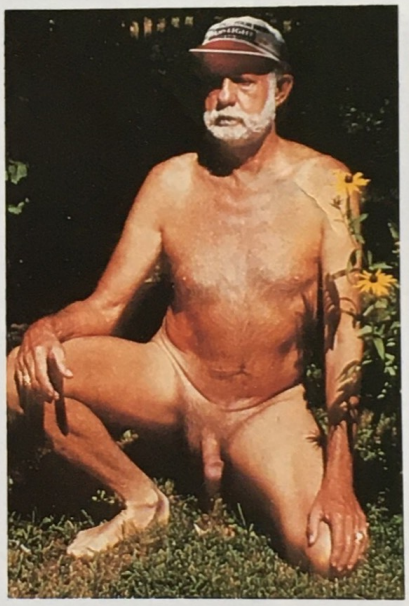

HARRY
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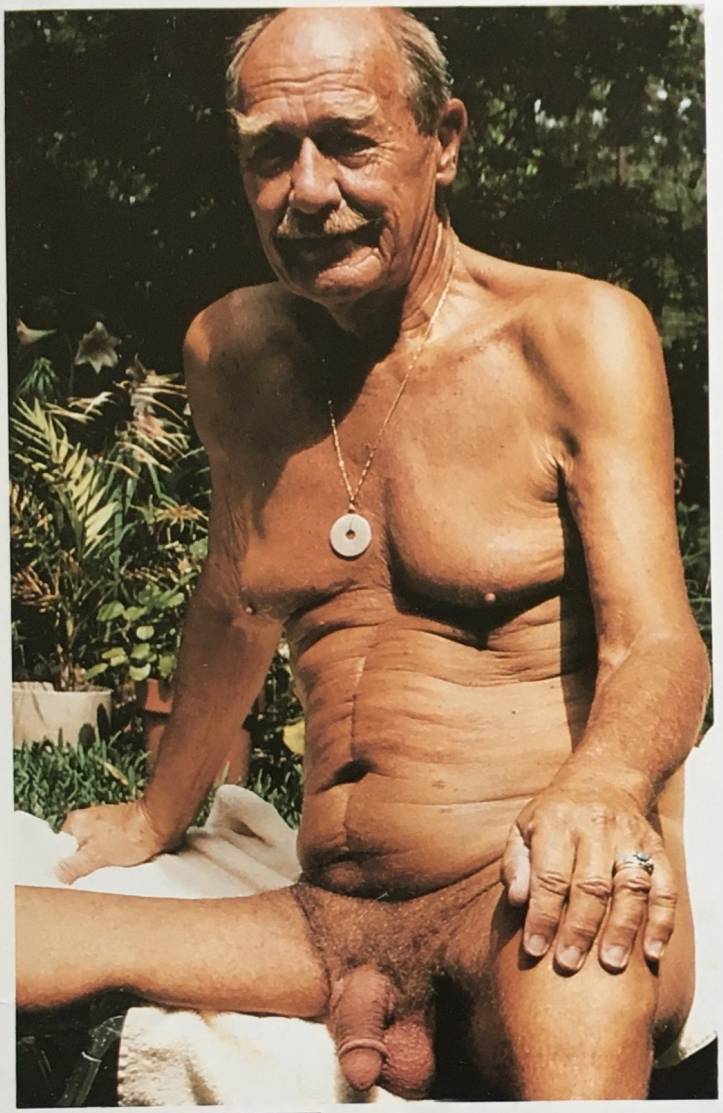
JOE

JACK - photo by JOEL

TRAVEL'N PARSON - a self-portrait



AXOLOTL - photo by TAY

BON VIVANT - photo by JOEL

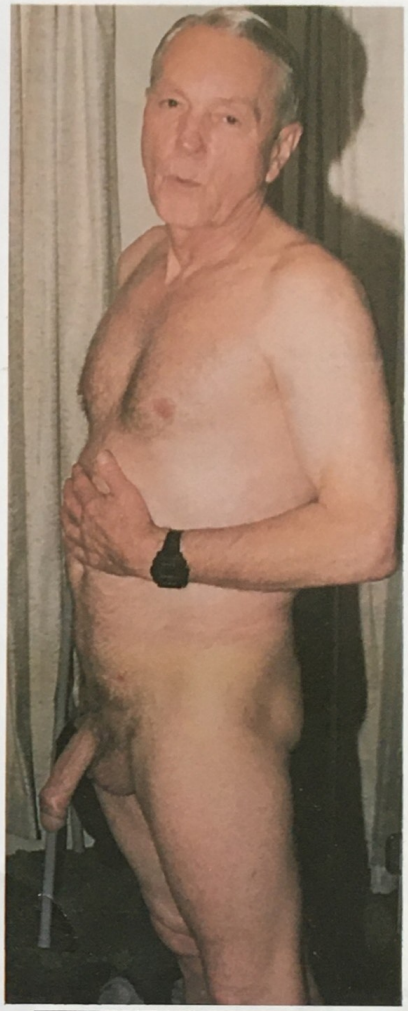
MERRILL - photo by JOEL

MR. MANAGER
photo by THE TRAVELER

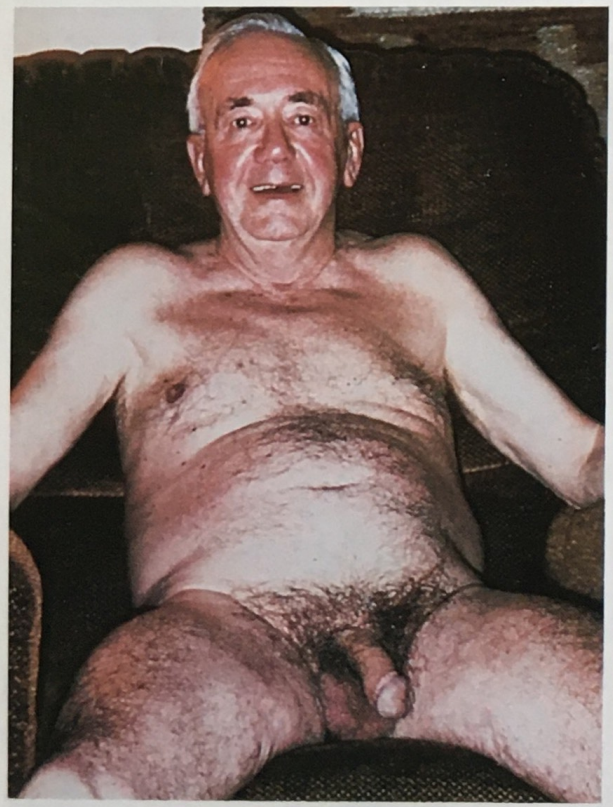
BEAUTIFUL DAY - photo by P.W.

CARL - photo by S.P.

MOUNTAIN MAN - photo by JOEL

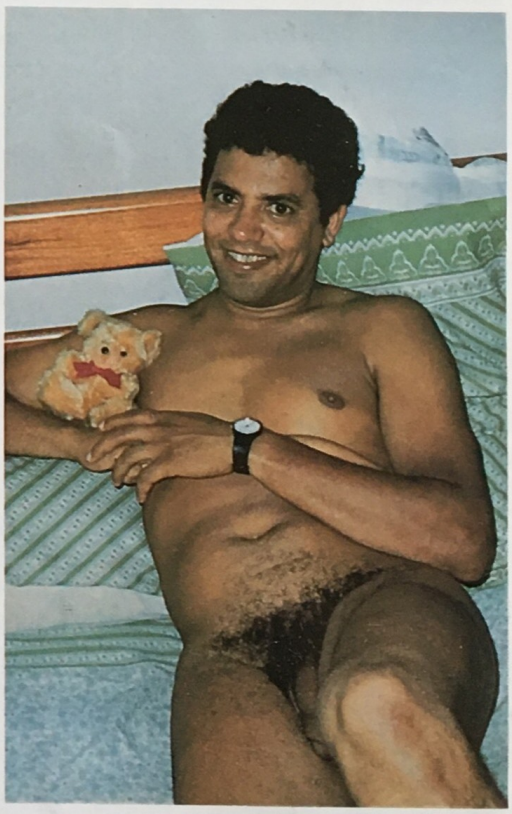


THE SWIMMER - photo by THE TRAVELER



HAWFINCH - photo by RON

JEEP - photo by WARREN G.



ROBY - photo by SWAN

stretched and flexed his powerful body.

Then he looked at me and his face went slack. "Oh, shit. It's you!"

Having dressed, we retired to the living room for drinks. I prepared and delivered them from the kitchen, serving Jerry first, then Eldon. "Jerry gets a Diet Seven-Up and Eldon gets a Jack Daniels and branch water."

Both men nodded and took their drinks. Tension filled the room.

"Does he know?" Jerry asked me.

"Not the whole story," said Eldon good-naturedly. "But he's waiting patiently."

I took a sip of my Scotch and smacked my lips, confident that both of them would somehow understand. After all, we'd come a long way already in just a couple of hours. "When I stopped off in Houston on my way to Tucson, I went into an arcade—you know, a book store with booths and glory holes. And there he was, all decked out in a business suit." I smiled at Jerry, who smiled back, probably more out of nervousness than anything else.

"I'd just come from this big presentation at Exxon," explained Jerry to Eldon.

Eldon nodded and turned his gaze back on me.

"He struck a chord—no, more like a raw nerve," I continued. "He looked like this college football coach I'd always had the hots for before I realized I liked men. Anyway, it was a comedy of errors, Eldon. I tried like hell to get him, but there was always someone ahead of me. Hell, I even propositioned him in the parking lot, but he just thought I was crazy."

"Not really," offered Jerry. "I'd just dropped a load and the guilt took hold. All I wanted to do was get the fuck away from that place."

"So then things got out of hand, sort of," I added.

"Sort of!" protested Jerry. He sat up in his chair and pointed at me, grinning at Eldon. "This guy *blackmails* me into coming to his goddamn motel room. He takes a flash picture of me getting a blow job in an arcade—or so I think. Then, when I finally find out that there was no film in the camera, I come at him, and he *decks* me and ties me up!"

Eldon absently placed his drink on the floor, almost spilling it. He stared at me with an expression I'd not seen before. A dark anxiety came over me as I acknowledged the possibility that Eldon was capable of being turned off by my previous actions.

Jerry apparently sensed that Eldon was disturbed. "Hey, it wasn't that bad, Eldon. Don't let it blow your mind. I mean, hell, I threw the first punch." He looked worriedly at Eldon.

"I was obsessed with him, Eldon," I said softly. "I did a terrible thing and I still haven't reconciled my guilt." I felt flushed as Eldon's expression remained the same.

"So anyway," continued Jerry, looking warily at Eldon, "being tied up gets me turned on, you know? So it turns out that I'm a closet bondage freak." He chuckled, no doubt in an attempt to lighten the atmosphere . "But seriously, it was the best thing that could have happened to me. Granted, I did go off the wagon again and I did split up with my wife, but at least I *found* myself. Barney wasn't the reason for those things. Hell, I was an alcoholic before that, and my marriage was on the rocks *way* before. I was already a closet cocksucker. And the job? Hell, they laid *everyone* off."

Eldon cleared his throat and seemed to force a light-hearted expression. "That's some story."

Jerry pointed at me, seeming to sense that Eldon was over the shock. "Then, back in August, I'm mowing the lawn in back with just shorts on and lo and behold, who comes through the gate but this one. He just walks up to me and starts to suck my cock, right there under the hot sun. I get a hard on just thinking about it." He groped himself and showed his erection to both of us. "Goddamn, this is a fucking dream come true. You guys saved my ass." With that, he dropped to his knees and opened up Eldon's fly, exposing a throbbing erection. He glanced back at me and went down on Eldon.

Eldon picked up his drink and took a large gulp. Closing his eyes, he leaned back into the chair, feeding Jerry his full length.

Jerry struggled to take out his cock, luring me to crawl across the room and bury it inside my throat.

Then I felt Eldon's big hand stroking my neck and knew that I had pulled it off pretty well.

Wednesday, December 19

For two months, we'd worked and lived together in an atmosphere of what appeared to be total harmony. The business thrived and prospered, and the three of us enjoyed a marvelous sexual relationship.

I still saw K.O. from time to time and enjoyed it more than ever, but I could sense that he was becoming more jealous of Gretchen's female lover. I got the feeling that K.O. desperately wanted to escape with Gretchen to a more traditional life style—that having sex with me was the only way to keep from losing his composure when Gretchen was seeing her girl friend. I never fooled myself into believing that K.O. was even bisexual, let alone gay. It wasn't hard to figure out that he went down on me out of some sort of reciprocal responsibility rather than desire. I was sure that he never enjoyed it, and I became convinced that Gretchen was vividly etched in his mind whenever we were together.

Then things began to change at home. Because of Jerry's loud snoring, I had to start sleeping by myself in order to get some sleep. Eldon (who slept like a log) and Jerry, however, continued sleeping together and many times would noisily have sex after I had gone to bed.

Although Eldon was still very affectionate to me, Jerry seemed to become more distant and less affectionate. I was therefore shattered when I accidentally came upon them as Jerry passionately kissed Eldon and joyfully wept.

Wanting to confront Jerry about his losing interest in me in the proper setting away from Eldon, I insisted that we take a short vacation to get away from the grind. We had the proper personnel to keep the business running without us, so it was fairly easy to talk Eldon into it, especially since he already had a place picked out. It was a villa, owned by a friend, on the coast south of Mazatlan, Mexico. The arrangements for the villa made, we were off.

Jerry paid the taxi driver while Eldon and I gathered the bags from the trunk. As the driver sped away, we stood in wonder at the entrance to the spectacular white villa. The sound of crashing surf came from the back of the house.

"Sure this is the right one?" I asked.

Eldon smiled. "I've been here a couple of times before."

"Looks palatial," Jerry offered.

"Wait'll you see the inside and the terrace overlooking the ocean," said Eldon.

"How far is Mazatlan?" I asked.

Eldon walked up the stairway to the front door. "About twenty-five miles."

"Twenty-five?" exclaimed Jerry. "It felt like a hundred in that cab."

"What if we run short of gin?" I asked, wondering if talk of liquor disturbed Jerry.

"The place is fully stocked," assured Eldon, using a brass knocker on the door to announce our arrival.

I looked at the heavy, ornate front door, then chuckled as a panel slid open and a brown eye peered through.

"Witherspoon and party," said Eldon.

The panel closed and the door opened, exposing a muscular young Mexican man dressed in white.

"*Señor* Weeterspoon! How are you?" He took Eldon's beefy hand and pumped it. "Welcome back, señor!"

"Ricardo, meet my friends," Eldon said, gesturing toward Jerry and me. "This is Barney Wilkinson and Jerry Boyd."

Ricardo quickly shook my hand, glancing at me briefly. On Jerry, however, his gaze lingered a little longer. But it was obvious that Eldon was someone special. "Come in, come in." He gestured grandly toward the sunken living room and electrifying view of the Pacific. "Let me show your friends the villa."

While Jerry and I followed on the tour, Eldon placed suitcases in the master bedroom, which was adjacent to the living room and afforded the same view of the ocean. Jerry and I were awestruck and followed quietly as Ricardo showed us the other bedrooms, baths, fully stocked kitchen and wet bar, elegant dining room, sauna, hot tub, small pool and fifty-foot terrace overlooking a private cove below.

We joined Eldon in the living room.

"*Señor*," said Ricardo to Eldon. "Will you need a cook? I know the best cook in all Mexico."

"No, thanks, Ricardo," said Eldon. "Jerry and I are good cooks. Besides, we want complete privacy for the next four days—except for tomorrow night with you and Carlos."

"I understand, *señor*."

I noticed the loving way Ricardo looked at Eldon and how frequently he gently touched him. Wondering if Eldon had ever parted those young, well-chisled buns, I glanced at Jerry to see if perhaps he'd caught on to what was going on. But he was likewise looking at Eldon with adoration, oblivious to Ricardo.

"You have our number if you need anything, *amigo*," continued Ricardo.

Eldon placed his arm around Ricardo's shoulders and escorted him to the front door. "I will. Say hello to your family and Carlos, okay?"

Ricardo beamed, obviously flustered from the heat generated by Eldon's touch. "*Señores*?" He waved at Jerry and me, glancing again at Jerry's crotch. "Until tomorrow."

Eldon closed the door and turned with a wide grin on his face. "Is this heaven or what?"

Spitefully groping Jerry in passing, I walked into the kitchen. "It's cocktail hour." I opened the refrigerator and found a delectable assortment of fresh vegetables, cheese, tortillas, fruit juices and a variety of meats. In the cabinets, I found very elegant china and glassware, then discovered a walk-in panty, complete with canned goods, bottled water, mixes, liquor reserves, flour and spices. In a drawer, I noticed a silver service for eight. "Lordy, they've included everything."

"It *should* be spectacular for a grand a day," said Eldon, making his way to the master bedroom. "Make me a drink, will you, Barney?"

"Coming right up." I pulled out a tray of ice cubes from the freezer and took them to the huge wet bar near the terrace.

Jerry started disrobing and followed Eldon. "I'll have a ginger ale."

I found a bottle of Jack Daniels and a small bottle of ginger ale, then smiled as I discovered a bottle of Johnny Walker Red for myself.

"Good God!" shouted Jerry from the bedroom. "Look at the size of this bed!"

I chuckled and made the drinks. I could hear them talking but couldn't understand what they were saying. And then there was hushed conversation followed by silence. Curious, I picked up their drinks and walked to the bedroom doorway. They were kissing tenderly and murmuring things to one another.

Eldon found me in his peripheral vision and quickly groped Jerry, ostensibly to make the scene less romantic-looking.

"I'm getting him primed for some all-night action," Eldon said lamely.

Jerry turned to look at me with a crimson face.

"Your drinks have arrived," I said, feigning indifference.

Eldon was right about his prediction. We did have sex nearly all night. As expected, Jerry had only passive sex with me, but Eldon tried to make up for it by going out of his way to esure that I was well taken care of.

NINE

CARLOS

Thursday, December 20

While Jerry and Eldon slept late, I cleaned up, slipped into a skimpy orange bathing suit, and struck out to discover the cove and beach. Half way down the steep wooden stairway, the entire cove became visible; I could see a clean, white beach with no one in sight. It seemed plausible that the beach would become private during high tide, offering no access except via the stairway. At that moment, however, the tide was out, and, because of a sand bar at the mouth of the cove, the water was almost still. The cove was like a vividly green lagoon.

Reaching the beach, I waded out to the sandbar and gazed down the shore line in both directions. Seeing no one, I took off my suit and walked to the back of the cove, hanging it on the stairway.

I watched with enchantment as a noisy flock of brilliantly colored parrots swirled down into the clearing of the cove and landed in a section of dense mangrove that bordered either side of the still water. They watched me in silence, then two flew away, followed by the others.

A warm gentle breeze enveloped me and swirled around my waist and through my legs, exciting my swelling cock. I smiled and stretched, offering my swaying cock to the wind, then slipped into the still water. I floated lazily and imagined being with K.O. I closed my eyes and formed a vision of the magnificent black man and myself, floating together after having mad, water-churning sex—not unlike a shark feeding frenzy. But I began to feel disturbed and wondered why I was pining for K.O. at all—why I wasn't back at the villa, waiting for

Jerry to wake up so that I could talk to him and find out what was bothering him. K.O. wasn't for the long haul, but Jerry was. I knew I had to get things right between us. I had to get the three of us back to being that perfect *menage a trois* again.

And then I saw the man, staring at my throbbing cock from a rock at the base of the mangrove trees on my right. He was in his late sixties with dark, smoldering brown eyes and white hair. He was tall and lithely built, with bronze, almost hairless skin. My vision was drawn to his hand, which held a leash. At the end of the leash stood a huge iridescent-green iguana, lazily chewing on one of several yellow hibiscus flowers the man was absently dropping down to it. As if to match the color of his pet, the man wore a scant, electric-green bathing suit and a large gold sunburst medallion around his neck.

"*Buenos dias*," I choked, standing in thigh-deep water.

"*Buenos dias*," answered the man, smiling, obviously beguiled.

"I thought I was alone," I said apologetically.

"It's okay," he assured with a thick Mexican accent. "Emeraldo has seen nude men before."

I laughed and regarded the lizard. "You from around here?" I waded toward him, watching the iguana warily. "Is that a monitor lizard or an alligator?"

The man looked lovingly at the beast. "He's kidding, my pet. Don't attack him." Then, to me, "Surely you saw the movie, 'Night of the Iguana.' They filmed it down the coast a bit. I played a minor role, as a matter of fact. And, yes, I do live around here."

I nodded, then sat in the water near the rock. "Is he friendly?"

"He's indifferent."

I pointed toward the villa above. "We're staying up there. Fantastic place."

"Thank you. I'm glad you are pleased."

I mulled over what he'd said. "Uh . . . you . . . ?"

"I own the house. Ricardo works for me."

"Oh, really? You must be . . . "

"Carlos. And you are Barney, I believe." He gestured with outstretched arms. "I own most of the villas on this beach."

"Are they all as spectacular as this one?" I was impressed.

"No." He grinned, then stepped down from the rock, causing the iguana to back toward the mangrove. "This house is my jewel, my showplace."

I looked squarely at his crotch, which featured three rather large mounds.

Carlos smiled. "Eldon used to bring his wife down here. I hear that she died. That saddens me."

I nodded.

"She was a fine woman . . . . She was very understanding, I believe."

"In what way?"

He dropped the leash and began wading around me. The iguana remained stationary, chewing on another flower. Again I looked at his bulge and slightly licked my lips.

"She knew what was going on."

"What *was* going on?"

"Ricardo is very taken with Eldon. He threw his tail at Eldon every time Ruth was elsewhere."

"I assume that you know the score on our arrangement, then."

He seductively slid his hands down his flat stomach and inside the tiny bathing suit. "I find it farcical . . . yet amusing. Who gets the short end of the stick?"

I pondered the question then decided it was none of his business. Again, I glanced down at the growing bulge. "I'd love the short end of *that* stick."

Carlos smiled and slowly walked into a maze of mangrove. He pulled down the bathing suit, exposing a tan, perfectly formed, seven inch masterpiece which lured me to follow. As I reached the dense vegetation, he slipped under a low hanging limb and disappeared. I followed and found myself inside a sandy clearing, under a verdant canopy. Carlos looked hungrily at me.

I approached him and gently pinched his nipples, smiling as he gasped and trembled.

"You're an exciting man," he said breathlessly.

I dropped to my knees and breathed hotly on his semi-erect cock.

"It doesn't get very hard any more," he said sadly. "I'm nearly impotent."

"Well, let's try, at least," I said, gulping down his cock.

Patiently and fluidly, I sucked his cock, occasionally pausing to remind him to relax and not worry about how long it might take. As I was about to give up, I sensed a slight thickening and thought I could hear a change in his breathing. The penis soon ballooned and eventually became hard.

I glanced up and saw that Carlos was incredulous over his performance. "That's it . . . *that's it* . . . it's going . . . *it's going to* . . . BLOW!"

Carlos rejoiced with a combination of laughter and moaning, filling my mouth with salty, thick semen. I began to masturbate as his throbbing continued, but he dropped to his knees and pulled my hand away.

"Now, you," he whispered.

I rolled over on my back and offered him my cock, which he enveloped lovingly. Amazingly, I was still horny after the night before and sensed that it wouldn't take long to get me off. Carlos apparently sensed my short fuse, too, for he began to suck me wildly until I arched my back and flexed my legs. Lowering his mouth to my testicles, he began to jack my cock and smiled as a small amount of thin semen peppered my belly.

Carlos muffled my moans with kisses, then we fell silent and held each other.

Hearing a scurrying sound near my head, I opened my eyes and met the flat stare of Emeraldo. Startled, I yelled and jumped up, causing the iguana to retreat into the bushes.

"Oh, no! Come back, Emeraldo!" yelled Carlos, who grabbed his bathing suit and ran after the lizard. Before disappearing, he turned and smiled. "See you tonight!"

Nearing the top of the stairs, I stopped out of sight of the house to put on my bathing suit and take a short rest. The sound of Jerry's voice reached me, and I climbed a little higher to hear more clearly.

" . . . come on . . . . Has he ever told you that he loved you?"

I listened for an answer from Eldon, but none was audible.

Then, more distinctly from Jerry: "That's not love. *This* is love."

I peered over the top step and saw Jerry atop Eldon on a chaise longue, kissing him hungrily. Abruptly, without thinking of consequences, I hopped to the top of the deck and blurted, "I'm back!"

Jerry turned quickly, losing his balance. At the same time, Eldon unintentionally pushed Jerry, causing him to topple to the deck.

"You two fucking *again*?" I said sarcastically.

A silly, guilty grin appeared on Eldon's face as a hostile look came to Jerry's.

I recognized both emotions instantly. "Who wants his cock sucked?" I walked toward Jerry, who was now standing and rubbing his slightly scratched left arm and leg. Reaching him, I knelt and took his dying cock inside my mouth. I sucked it momentarily, feeling it shrink to total flaccidness. Letting it slip noisily out of my mouth, I looked up at him with an indifferent expression, intimidating him into looking away. I glanced at Eldon and got to my feet. "I'm thirsty." I walked into the house and headed straight for the bar.

We had lunch together on the terrace, but the tension was evident in spite of Eldon's attempts at levity. After lunch, the ambience improved somewhat and Jerry decided to take a walk on the beach. After he left, Eldon suggested that we take a shower together. We both took turns going down on each other, but it was evident that all the previous ejaculations had taken their toll. Still wet, we walked out to the terrace and watched Jerry hunt for shells.

"Are you having second thoughts?" asked Eldon

"Yes," I answered softly. "I think that we were a little too idealistic."

"He's growing to resent you, Barney."

"I wonder why?" I shot sarcastically.

Eldon turned and leaned against the rail. "He seems to think that you don't love me."

"And what do you think?"

Eldon reached for me and pulled me to his body. He nestled my head against his chest. "I love you very much, Barney, but there are times when I crave your touch. . . . You don't hand out much affection."

I pulled back and stared at him. "You never told me that before."

"And you never told me that you loved me."

I backed away from him, amazed. "I've shown it in many ways on many occasions. I never knew you had to hear it."

It was as if Eldon had not heard my explanation. "But then I look back and I can see how I barged into your life. You never stood a chance, did you?"

I smiled. "You grew on me."

There was a period of tense silence as both of us watched Jerry climbing on the rocks. Eventually Jerry stopped and looked up at us, his gaze fixed for some time.

"So do you?" asked Eldon at length.

"What?"

"Love me."

I looked at him affectionately, then placed my arms around him. I kissed him very passionately. "Yes, I love you, Eldon. I love you very much."

Eldon reciprocated with similar passion as I looked defiantly down at Jerry.

Later that afternoon, while Jerry swam in the pool and I read a book, Eldon worked on his tan.

"Oh, I forgot," said Eldon. "Dinner tonight will be on a yacht."

"A yacht!" exclaimed Jerry.

"Whose?" I asked.

"The owner of this villa—and half of Mazatlan, for that matter—Carlos Ferreira. He's Ricardo's boss. I mean, this guy's something else!" said Eldon.

"In what way?" asked Jerry, treading water.

I looked up from my book.

"He's handsome as hell, seventy—he looks fifty-five—hung like a horse and rich as seal's milk."

"A yacht," repeated Jerry, his expression filled with child-like wonder.

"They'll pick us up in about two more hours. I thought we'd serve them cocktails here, then go on with them."

"I'll make some munchies," said Jerry, swimming toward the ladder.

"I have to take a piss," announced Eldon, going into the house.

I watched Jerry rise from the water and reach for a towel. It was my chance. "What's going on, Jerry?"

He dried himself and avoided looking at me.

"What happened to that magic?"

Jerry shrugged. "I'm having fun. Aren't you?"

I smiled wryly. "You're falling in love with Eldon and falling in loathe with me. It wasn't supposed to work this way, Jerry."

"I don't know what you're . . . "

"You want him for yourself?"

"Get off it, Barney," Jerry said, rushing inside to join Eldon.

I finished the book and went inside to dress. I lay out a baby blue pullover shirt and the same white trousers I'd worn at the Phoenix party—the night I'd met Eldon. I showered and dressed without putting on underwear, admiring my basket in the mirror. I sprayed on my favorite cologne and a powerful feeling of anxiety came over me. It was also K.O.'s favorite.

The plan for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres was cancelled when a burly, traditionally dressed chauffeur showed up without Ricardo and party, advising that the three Americans were to ride with him to the dinner party. So while the chauffeur waited next to a Mercedes limousine, Jerry wrapped all the hors d'oeuvres in plastic wrap and stashed them inside the refrigerator, finally joining Eldon and me inside the car.

The chauffeur drove us to a pier just down the beach and transferred us to a launch, which was docked inside a small marina with several moored fishing boats and two small yachts. He piloted the launch out to sea, past a line of rocks, then turned it sharply to follow the shore line. I found the chauffeur quite attractive and wondered if he liked men. I wondered if he slept with Carlos.

The sun began to set on the horizon, and we were mesmerized by a combination of the sunset, the feel of soft, warm winds, and a dark, lushly green shore line.

Soon the launch rounded a protrusion of rocks and headed into a cove similar to and obviously deeper than the one behind our villa. In the center of the cove was a sleek yacht—at least seventy feet long—with lights strung out from bow to stern.

Wide-eyed, Eldon turned to the stoic chauffeur. "Carlos Ferreira's?"

The man nodded, concentrating on docking at the ship's ladder.

Eldon looked back at Jerry and me with a wide grin. "Carlos Ferreira's yacht. He wasn't *this* rich the last time I saw him."

I allowed myself the fleeting fantasy of becoming Carlos' lover. I wondered what it would be like to sail down the coasts of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile, past Tierra del Fuego, then navigating the angry south Atlantic—to sail through

fifty-foot swells past South Africa's cape and on to Madagascar, Mauritius and the Chagos Archipelago.

As the boat docked, Ricardo appeared in a brilliant, multicolored bikini, followed by a middle-aged, barrel-chested stranger in a yellow tank top and leather shorts.

"*Señor* Weeterspoon! *Don* Ferreira, *Señor* Weeterspoon is here!" Ricardo yelled.

Then Carlos Ferreira emerged, bringing a smile to my face. His eyes sought mine, locking hungrily.

Carlos had arranged to have a spectacular dinner served by candlelight under the stars. A heavy-set cook and the brawny chauffeur stoically served the meal and provided impeccable continental service. The menu included a grand Paella, complete with lobster, prawns and conch. There was a perfect Grand Marnier soufflé for dessert.

After dinner, the table was cleared and put away; Carlos dismissed both the cook and the chauffeur, both of whom took another launch back to the marina. As if by plan, Ricardo turned down the lights and put on a tape of Latin dance music, glancing around for Carlos' approval. Eldon and Jerry sat together, but Ricardo sat on Eldon's other side. The barrel-chested one, Santos, sat next to Jerry, much to Jerry's obvious discomfort. I sat next to Carlos across from the others, immediately pressing my leg against his.

"So," Carlos began, "your life has changed very much, Eldon."

"Radically," said Eldon, rolling up his eyes.

"Where are you from, Jerry?"

"Houston."

"I went to school in Houston," said Carlos. "Rice University."

Jerry smiled. "Good school."

"I left after one semester," continued Carlos. "My father wanted me to be an engineer, but I wanted to be an actor."

"So where did you end up?" asked Eldon.

"Northwestern, near Chicago. Very good drama department. My father approved, finally."

"How did you get into real estate?" I asked, pressing harder against his leg.

"I did a series of very popular movies here in Mexico back in the sixties." He pressed back and looked at me lecherously. "I invested wisely."

"What were the movies?" asked Eldon, apparently agitated by Ricardo's encroachment.

I could see that Ricardo's leg was pressed hard against Eldon and assumed that the big man was becoming excited yet afraid of Jerry's reaction.

"They were similar to your grade 'B' movies and were never dubbed in English," said Carlos, laughing. "They never made it past Tijuana."

I looked at Jerry, who was surveying Santos' ample crotch out of the corner of his eye.

That'll loosen you up, whore, I thought.

A *merengue* began to play and I jumped up. "Come on," I said to Carlos.

Our host cocked his head in astonishment. "You can dance this?"

I held my left hand up and rubbed my belly with my right hand, executing the basic steps with my feet. "I was stationed in San Juan when I was in the navy."

"A sailor!" screamed Ricardo, absently groping Eldon.

Eldon immediately turned to see if Jerry saw the grope, but when he saw that Jerry was preoccupied with what was between Santos' legs, the direction of the evening took a radical turn. Ignoring Jerry, Eldon groped Ricardo back, prompting the young man to suddenly cover him with kisses.

"Okay, sailor," said Carlos, standing up. "Let's dance the *merengue*."

"He never dances," whispered Ricardo to Eldon as he snaked his hand underneath Eldon's belt.

"You'd think they already knew one another, wouldn't you?" mumbled Eldon.

I winked at Eldon, then glanced at Jerry, who was pouting over Eldon's sudden interest in Ricardo.

Carlos led and we danced fluidly, each grinding a smoldering crotch into the other's. As if on cue, we both began to unbutton each other's shirt, then moved down to belt buckles and zippers. Breaking apart just long enough to take off our clothing and shoes, we continued our dance in the nude. Ricardo and Santos applauded and yelled out high-pitched Mexican howls of encouragement. Eldon joined in while Jerry sulked.

Caught up in the madness, Ricardo pulled Eldon up and pretended to dance as he unzipped Eldon's trousers out of sight of Jerry. Santos pulled a protesting Jerry to his feet and began to undress him. Jerry tried to pull away but stopped when he saw that Ricardo had gone down on Eldon. His face flushed with anger, he unzipped Santos' leather shorts and went down on him, obviously in retaliation.

A wild samba was next, and Carlos begged off. Instead, he turned on a switch near the ladder to the bridge, and several underwater spotlights came on, illuminating a reef teeming with fish of every color. The fish scurried away from the lights, leaving a clear, slightly greenish pool.

Carlos grinned at me and dove over the side. I jumped in after him and immediately reached for his cock. As the others watched, we assumed a sixty-nine position underwater and rolled lazily.

I felt weightless, as if awaiting birth within a womb of emerald-green amniotic fluid. And as I began to drift off into unconsciousness, Carlos pulled me above the water, whispering, "Is it to die for, my love?"

By the time Carlos and I had climbed back on board, the other four had retired down into the master cabin and were having sex on the plush carpeting. Stepping first over Ricardo, whose sphincter was being stretched to the limit by Eldon's cock, then Jerry, whose balls were already stuffed inside Santos' mouth, Carlos and I lay on a couch and resumed our sixty-nine.

From the edge of my field of vision, I watched as Eldon became inflamed and tore into Ricardo with a vengeance. I glanced at Jerry, who by now had freed Santos' horse meat from its leather prison and was staring at it in disbelief.

Later, through less-focused eyes, I was presented a soft, diffused image of Eldon, drooling saliva over Ricardo's head as he screamed out with passion. Jerry, wide-eyed in climax, frantically jacked Santos' huge penis with two hands and squealed with glee as jissom shot upward nearly three feet. I closed my eyes and welcomed Carlos' unexpectedly quick bounty. I reciprocated almost immediately, much to Carlos' delight.

Well into the night, a bottle of Courvoisier was passed around, and the party got louder. Eldon and Carlos traded endless jokes, while Ricardo and Santos tried to switch partners. Although Eldon appeared receptive to Santos, Jerry seemed to

drift into a quiet mood, as if he had feelings of guilt.

Eldon, high on the cognac, became enamored with Santos' cock and followed him back into a bedroom. Jerry reluctantly allowed Ricardo to go down on him but continued to look toward the room where Eldon had gone.

"Could I have something besides cognac?" I asked, walking toward a bar which included, among other things, a liter of Chivas Regal.

"Sure," said Carlos with unfocused eyes.

"Make me a ginger ale, Barn," Jerry ordered.

I nodded, pouring the beverages and handing Jerry his. Hearing moans from the bedroom, I made my way there, sipping Scotch along the way. Carlos followed.

We watched blissfully as Eldon robustly fucked Santos. After Eldon climaxed, I cooled Santos' frenzy by wildly sucking him until he came a second time. At that point, all four of us collapsed onto the bed and fell asleep.

I was awakened by a loud splash, followed by a yell from Ricardo, followed by another splash.

"*Señor* Weeterspoon! Come quick!"

Both Eldon and I jumped out of the bed and ran for the outside deck. Over the side was Ricardo, holding the ladder with one hand and Jerry with the other.

Jerry was dead drunk and coughing up water.

Friday, December 21

I awakened as players in my dream disintegrated, leaving me with the fictive taste of K.O.'s saliva, as well as the phantom warmth of his body. Then the raw memory of the previous night hit me, bringing ice pick-stabbing pain behind my eyes. "Fuck me to tears," I mumbled, struggling out of bed.

I walked into the kitchen and put on some coffee, pouring myself a Compari and soda in the interim. Spotting Eldon lying on a chaise longue near the pool, I walked out to join him.

"Some party, huh? I said, slightly reeling at the assault of sunlight on my painful eyes.

Eldon glared at me, then turned his gaze toward the ocean. "He said that you put alcohol in his drink."

"And I said last night that I didn't," I shot back, "and I *still* say it. I know what I fucking poured."

"All right." Eldon looked at me with a softer expression. "I believe you. I suppose Jerry was delirious. Maybe Ricardo spiked his drink. After all, he didn't know that Jerry's an alcoholic."

"And maybe Jerry did it on his own, Eldon," I said flatly.

Eldon considered it, then shook his head. "I just can't believe that, Barn. I just don't buy it."

"Whatever," I said, dismissing the subject and walking to the railing.

"I wonder if he'll be all right?" asked Eldon, joining me.

"Never know," I said indifferently. "Is he still asleep?"

"He's in the bathroom, I think."

I looked through the window and spotted a nude Jerry in the kitchen. "There he is."

Eldon quickly turned and solicitously rushed to Jerry.

I watched as Eldon kissed Jerry and fussed over him. Then, as Eldon began making breakfast for him, I headed down the stairway to the cove.

The tide was out like the last time, and I swam in the nude, scanning the mangrove line for Carlos. I felt watched and swam to the sandbar, standing atop it, looking both ways. Then I saw a yacht almost hidden by a jutting peninsula. It was about two miles out.

I swam to the rock Carlos had perched upon the day before and climbed onto it, wincing as the texture of the rock irritated my butt. Then I heard the sound of a launch and smiled as Carlos rounded the rocks and shut down the engine.

Emeraldo, Carlos' iguana, sat regally inside the boat and slowly moved his head as Carlos threw out an anchor. Waving excitedly, I swam out to the boat and hauled myself into it, almost bumping into Emeraldo.

Carlos was on me instantly, kissing me passionately. "I missed you."

I responded with a willing mouth and probing hands. "What a night."

"Sorry about Jerry," Carlos said between kisses. "We didn't know he had a drinking problem."

"It's not your fault, Carlos," I said, casing the area for boats or people, then pulling Carlos' cock out of his bathing suit. "Enough of Jerry. More of you."

As I swallowed his cock, I could hear a quivering, airy whistle.

"Barney, Barney. I could really fall for you, my lovely friend."

I paused and looked up at him. "Don't even think about it. I'm so fucked up now, I don't know which way is up."

Carlos seemed to weigh what I'd said, then lifted me off, pulling me up, face-to-face. "How old are you, Barney?

"I'll be sixty-three in January. Why?"

Carlos sighed. "I'm nearly seventy-one, Barney. Now I think about things I never thought of before. You will, too."

"Such as?" I nestled my head into his chest.

"Time . . . peace . . . someone who cares about you and wants to share what little time they have left."

"I do think about those things." I sat at Carlos' feet and played with his cock, staring absently into Emeraldo's yellow eyes. "I know I'll have to shit or get off the pot someday. I'll know in a couple more months. When it's time, I'll know."

"And who knows? Maybe you'll come back to me and give me a chance to win you over."

I unconsciously reached out to stroke Emeraldo's head, causing the reptile to merely close his eyes. I placed my arms around Carlos and hugged him. "I feel good here," I said at length. "Maybe this is where I belong." I gazed at the horizon of blue-green sea and lush, palm-fringed bush.

"Maybe it is," Carlos said softly.

When I finally returned to the villa, I found Jerry dressed and sitting glassy-eyed on the couch in the living room. A near-empty vodka bottle was in his hand.

I looked sadly at him.

His face contorted into a revolting, hateful leer. "I ought to kick your cocksucking ass, you . . . fucking . . . fucking *asshole*."

I sighed and walked past him. "Remember what happened the last time you tired to kick my ass?"

"Fuck you," Jerry mumbled, taking a sip from the bottle.

I found Eldon in the master bedroom, packing. He merely looked up and continued packing.

"Why'd you let him have a drink?"

Eldon's face grew crimson, a sight I'd never before seen.

"How're we going to get him home?" I persisted.

"I don't know," growled Eldon in a low, menacing tone.

"You call a cab?"

"Yes," muttered Eldon, closing his and Jerry's suitcases.

"Well, well . . . it's a good thing I came back," I said, becoming angry. "What were you going to do, run off and leave me?"

"Why not?" barked Eldon. "I figured your buddy would take you home on his goddamn yacht! I saw you down there in the boat!"

"So what?" I became defensive.

"Face it," said Eldon, picking up the suitcases and marching past me. "You're a whore, Barn. First it was K.O., then you had to have Jerry, again. Now, Carlos . . . ."

"Oh, and was it a figment of my imagination, or did you bang everyone without a finger up his ass last night?" I followed Eldon into the living room.

"Jerry," said Eldon, dropping the suitcase to the floor. "I got news for you." He took the bottle out of Jerry's hand and slammed it on the bar, shattering it. "We're going home and you're going into a treatment center. Got that?"

Jerry looked like a defeated child, but he said nothing.

"There's really no other choice, my man," continued Eldon. "It's either a hospital, or you're on your own."

I was both impressed and alarmed at the severity of Eldon's action and decided to keep quiet, as Jerry apparently decided to do. I rushed into my bedroom and hastily packed, finishing just as the cab pulled up and honked.

TEN

TROUBLE

Friday, January 18, 1985

AlthoughJerry had stayed at the treatment center near Palm Springs for almost three weeks, Eldon and I were much too busy with the company to work on repairing our relationship. Jerry returned home a changed man, or so it seemed. He had a healthy glow and seemed to be more devoted to Eldon than ever before.

Although Jerry was cordial toward me, sex between us ceased. Occasionally, Eldon and I would have sex, but it would invariably be when Jerry was away. It wasn't the same as before. I reconciled myself to being the odd man out, and, in spite of the fact that Eldon still loved me, I felt that my continued presence was causing a strain on him.

I would usually meet K.O. at some motel once a week, and those were my only remaining joyful moments. So it was a pleasant surprise when I found out that K.O. and the girls had been invited to my sixty-third birthday party.

Although Eldon had billed it as "Barney's Birthday Party," the occasion was obviously used to reciprocate for some of the parties we'd been invited to in the past. None of the attendees were really that close to me, except Gretchen and K.O. Several were old friends of Eldon's and not even gay.

I was greatly relieved, therefore, when K.O. arrived with Gretchen and her lover, Marie, a beautiful young Filipina. I recognized Gretchen coming through the doorway and braced myself for the awesome rush I always felt upon seeing K.O.

As he followed the women inside, I could see that he was dressed in a white turtleneck with a tan blazer and brown trousers. The sight sent adrenalin shooting through my body and probably caused my pulse to soar. And then it seemed like there were only K.O. and me in the room. When K.O.'s eyes met mine, I walked trance-like to meet him.

He smiled and nodded, then watched as Gretchen and Marie went to join two other lesbians.

"Hi there, Coach," I greeted.

"Whaddaya say, birthday boy?" He shook my hand. "Happy birthday."

"Thanks. You're the only one who's said that so far."

He looked around. "What, no banners or party favors? What's going on around here?"

"You're the only birthday present I need," I growled.

He seemed acutely uncomfortable. What I'd said apparently disturbed him.

"Something wrong?"

"No, why?" he answered, suddenly his usual self.

After a few drinks, K.O. appeared to loosen up and gave his undivided attention to me. At one point, Eldon gave me several birthday cards to ceremoniously open. As all the guests stood around, I read every one, laughing at them all, even those that weren't very funny. Afterwards, no evidence of a birthday party remained. K.O. and I sat on the couch, eating hors d'oeuvres, drinking and exchanging observations.

"Watch Jerry," I directed. "Watch how he clings to Eldon now. I mean, Eldon's now a savior—not just a lover. Ever since that railroading I took in Mexico, things haven't been the same."

"Eldon doesn't believe your story, I take it."

"Apparently not. Oh, he forgives me, all right. You know Eldon; the guy *is* a sweetheart." I sighed deeply. "But now, he belongs to someone else. Guess I just didn't give enough, huh?"

"Jerry was staring at you a second ago," said K.O. "Strange look."

"He's dying for me to hightail it out of here."

"Will you?"

I looked at him with a wry smile. "Only if you go with me."

K.O. passed off the remark with a laugh.

"K.O.? Are we fools?" I asked him after a pause.

He considered the question. "Are we fools . . . ."

"Look at Gretchen and Marie."

K.O. complied.

"Gretchen is like Eldon, and Marie is like Jerry."

K.O. frowned, obviously not understanding the comparison.

"Gretchen is a sweetheart, too, and plays the dutiful wife, yet she probably wants Marie more than she wants you."

"Oh, I don't know about *that*, now." K.O. shook his head quickly.

"Bull shit," I shot back. "I know that Marie moved in with you guys a month ago. Shit, man, Marie and Jerry have the inside tracks . . . *and we're fools*."

K.O. chewed on a canapé and observed Marie fondling Gretchen's hair. He watched as his wife acknowledged the contact by Marie with a warm, very loving, long look.

"Fools," I repeated.

K.O. and I turned our attention to Jerry and Eldon, who were standing with a group exchanging jokes. Jerry rested his hand on Eldon's shoulder, looking from time to time at me in defiance.

"Are we?" K.O. asked in a small voice.

"I think so."

He again watched the girls as Gretchen patted Marie on the ass.

"Now that they're so preoccupied, why don't we take a walk?" I suggested, licking my lips slightly.

He looked at me and smiled. Realizing what I meant, he stretched and shivered. "Why not?"

"See that hallway?" I nodded toward the hallway to the garage. "At the end of it is a stairway to a garage apartment. The door is unlocked and there's a nice warm bed just waiting for some action. Now, I'm going to get another drink, and I'll meet you up there in, say, ten minutes, okay?"

K.O. smiled impishly and nodded.

I lay nude on the bed, my cock swaying like a coiled snake. The only light came from a small, dim lamp near the bed. It created voluptuous shadows over my torso.

The apartment door creaked open, and K.O. quietly entered, walking toward the light. He stared down at me, then stripped in the doorway, letting his clothes fall at his feet. There was a look of relentless lust in his eyes.

It occurred to me that I'd never had him after so many drinks and wondered what effect the alcohol would have on his libido. Since his abundant penis was already shiny with stretched skin, I dismissed any adverse physical effect. I searched his almost savage expression and felt my body quake in anticipation. "Another dimension?" I whispered.

He held a quieting finger to his lips. "Just lie there," he ordered. "Just like that . . . . Yeah, just like that."

He was like a different man, and the effect sent goose bumps rippling up and down my body. I looked closely at the swaying tip of his cock and watched a discharge of precum sparkle and descend to the floor like honey from a spoon.

He took a step, then stroked his cock, bringing another thick drop to his slit. Smiling at my hungry gasp, he must have sensed what I desired and moved closer, letting the drool stretch downward toward my open mouth.

"Lordy, Lordy," I whispered, willing the slowly moving liquid into my mouth.

The syrupy discharge hovered for agonizing seconds before finally dropping onto my tongue, there to be carefully tasted and consumed like a rare cordial.

His lips parted and his expression turned more severe. He held his cock and lightly slapped my lips with it. He slapped them again, harder, then rubbed his naturally lubricated head around and around them. Abruptly, he slammed the massive cock against my forehead, stunning me, peppering my face with hot, sparkling droplets.

Grunting, he mounted my neck and humped my face, smearing drool over it. He descended down my torso, humping my breasts, stomach, crotch and thighs. He seemed intent upon grinding his cock against every inch of my skin, from my face to the soles of my feet. Abruptly gliding back up my body, he began devouring my lips, probing with his tongue, biting, inhaling my breath, crying out into my mouth. "Fuck me, Barney," he whispered.

I was amazed. "You've never been fucked before," I protested.

"Fuck me, goddamnit," he growled roughly.

While I reached for the jar of lubricant and a condom, K.O. stroked himself, staring down at my flushed cock. I spread an abundant amount of lubricant over it and pressed a larger amount against his sphincter. I felt relieved as my two fingers slipped inside without resistance.

Before I could get off my back, K.O. straddled my crotch and pressed his ass hard against my cock.

"No, not that way," I warned.

"Go for it," he grunted, gliding down my shaft, the pain obviously tearing into him. He gasped, then moaned and froze his movement as if impaled by a spear.

"Okay?" I asked, hoping I wouldn't go limp out of concern.

"Okay," he said after a pause. He sighed. "It's okay now."

The tightness of his opening, combined with the thrill of being inside such an exciting man, was electrifying. I had to continually think of bizarre, nonsexual things in order to avoid a premature climax. I began to feel caught up in a split-screen dream, complete with K.O., clowns, sunset and . . . iguanas.

He seemed to sense my mounting surge and started masturbating. As his face flushed, his facial and neck veins protruded. His eyes bulged wildly. His teeth clenched and he struggled to breath through them.

Reaching my own threshold of rapture, I began to whimper. Suddenly I gasped as I realized that we were about to have simultaneous ejaculations. Concerned that the people downstairs would hear us, I covered his mouth with my hands.

Then his eyes rolled upward and his mouth flew open, giving freedom to a low rumbling moan. The moan continued, getting louder and higher in spite of my muffling hand.

As he frantically pounded, bright white jissom boiled over the head of his cock, some of it reaching my outstretched tongue. More flowed into his hand, and, as it became full, he slapped it onto my lips, sending me off like a rocket into space.

My climax was like a small explosion, and I was sure that the condom had been torn to shreds by the velocity of my load. Although I don't remember it, I must have cried out loudly, because K.O. was pressing both his hands against my mouth, whispering for me to be quiet.

We lay side-by-side, holding hands and looking up at the ceiling. From the driveway below came sounds of people leaving.

"We'd better get back downstairs," I whispered.

"Nothing like that's ever happened to me before, Barney," he mumbled.

"So how do you feel about it?"

"Ecstatic . . . depressed . . . "

"Depressed?" I turned to look at him. "Why on earth are you depressed?"

"Why didn't we just leave it the way it was? Why couldn't we have just . . . kept it on the plane it was on? It would have been so much simpler."

"You feel we're on a different plane now?"

He squeezed my hand. "You pointed out quite effectively that I'm a fool as well as you. I see that now, and the relationship with Gretchen will never be the same. It's over." He looked at me. "No crying over spilt milk. Done. The feeling I had for her gets transferred to you."

I felt an overpowering sense of elation and sat up.

"If only it was that simple," he continued. "I want to love you . . . *should* love you, because you *obviously* love me. So many times I've hurt for you when you wanted to say it but were afraid you'd lose me. I read you like a book." He propped his head up. "Is it love I feel for you, or is it the obligation to reciprocate? I say it and it sounds alien to me. Two men loving each other? How could they? I mean, the sex is one thing—if it feels good, do it, you know? But *loving* a man . . . "

"Likewise, if it feels good, do it," I said softly. "It shouldn't be confusing, K.O. If it's really love, it'll happen, come

hell or high water." I ran my fingers through his curly chest hair. "You'll know when you wake up tomorrow. If you're confused or if you feel anxiety, then walk away from it for a while. If you're in love, your heart will lead you back."

"What would you do if I walked away?"

I shrugged. "Wait to see if your heart will bring you back."

"And what if it didn't? What would you do?"

I thought for a minute. "Die a little, then go off and look elsewhere. My time's too short to carry a torch."

More farewells were spoken outside, and I got up to hand K.O. his clothes. "Has Gretchen asked for a divorce again?"

He nodded sadly.

"If you wake up tomorrow in love with me, then there's only one thing to do."

"What?" asked K.O., dressing.

"We find a place to live together," I said flatly.

He dressed with a grave expression on his face. "Decision time, huh?"

"*Life* decision time," I added.

Saturday, January 19

I greeted the morning with a wholly different outlook on my direction in life. The moment I awakened, the vision of K.O.'s face emerged in my mind. On one hand, I felt elated and very much in love, but on the other, there was an underlying anxiety.

"Patience. Calm. Cool," I whispered.

I shaved, showered and brushed my plates and few remaining teeth, then went into the kitchen to make coffee.

Jerry was sitting at the kitchen counter, sipping coffee and reading the *Los Angeles Times*. Eldon was outside cleaning the pool. As I approached, Jerry glanced up indifferently and continued reading the paper.

"Good morning, Jer," I sang.

He looked at me suspiciously. "Morning," he muttered.

"My, but you look fresh and edible this morning," I purred, pouring some coffee.

"Must have been some fuck," said Jerry, nodding toward the stairway to the garage apartment. "We heard it all the way down here."

"It was, dear boy. It was." I took a sip of coffee and ate a piece of leftover bacon. "Were you panting at the keyhole?"

Jerry's eyes narrowed. "Niggers don't turn me on."

I glared at him. It took all of my self-control to keep from hitting him. At that moment I completely loathed him. "Jerry, you were lifted up out of a dead end cesspool and brought here due to my efforts. You've repaid that gracious act by successfully playing Eldon like a harmonica and turning him against me. Now you call my new lover a 'nigger.'" I approached him menacingly and watched him reach into the steak knife drawer. "Touch one, and Eldon will have no lovers at all," I said hoarsely.

He turned ashen and watched me warily, finally pulling his hand from the drawer.

"Your testosterone level is depleting, Jerry. I even think your hips are a little wider now. Poor Eldon. One day, he's going to wake up and find that he's stuck with a queen." I glanced at Eldon, who hadn't seen me. "I thought he was going in to work this weekend."

With trembling hands, Jerry continued to read the paper. "We're going to Palm Springs to a brunch, then on to a party tonight." His voice sounded small.

"Is it safe to assume that I'm not invited?" I looked for a response and found none. "Spending the night?"

"Probably."

"Good. I hate long, drawn-out good-byes," I said, walking back to my room with the coffee.

"Good-byes? What do you mean?" Jerry called after me.

I ignored him.

I brazenly pulled up in front of K.O.'s house three hours later and walked up to the front door. I rang the door bell, then heard rushed footfalls.

Gretchen opened the door, mouth agape. "Well, at least he didn't run off with you."

I studied her, afraid to ask what she'd meant. "Where is he?"

"He took two suitcases full of his shit and left this morning at the crack of dawn," she said, holding the door open for me. "I figured he was running off with you, especially after what went on last night."

My face turned numb. "What'd he say last night?" I stiffly walked inside.

"That he'd finally realized it was useless living with me. That he was fed up with the situation." She sat on a couch and gestured for me to do likewise. "I figured it was the booze, so I ignored him."

"Where do you think he went?" I asked, feeling forlorn.

"I don't know, Barney," she said compassionately, sighing. "I won't deny that I'm relieved. The tension was getting to be too much."

"I . . . I thought he would come with me. Uh . . ." I shook my head, fighting back tears. "I talked him *into* it . . . but he was supposed to come to *me*."

"Maybe he will," she said encouragingly. "Maybe he had to go off somewhere and think." She massaged my shoulder. "He's straight, Barney. It's not easy for a guy like him. That macho shit's been fed to him all his life, you know. It's different in our world. How many older gay black men have you met?"

I nodded in understanding.

"It's funny," she said. "I always knew when he'd been with you. He was always anxiety-ridden for about an hour or so afterward."

"Guilt? I never thought he had any qualms."

"How do I put this like a lady?" She rolled up her eyes. "Straight shooter Gretchen, lost for words . . . . Those times when he went down on you, he had to *balance* out the situation by fucking the hell out of some prostitute. I guess he wanted to make sure that he wouldn't turn queer."

I was momentarily speechless and had trouble clearing my throat. "Well, I guess I'll just have to wait it out."

"Barney, he told me that he worried you'd fall in love with him. He's basically a good man. He'd rather hurt you up front than down the line when it would hurt so much more."

"I know." I stood up, then bent over and kissed her on the cheek. "Be happy with Marie. Best of luck." I turned and walked to the door.

"Same to you, Barn."

I stopped with my hand on the door. "You'll talk to him again . . . . Tell him that I'll wait for him."

I opened the door and walked to my car. I felt totally empty and helpless.

Sunday, January 20

While Jerry and Eldon were away, I took all the belongings I originally brought with me, leaving behind all of Eldon's gifts, including a gold watch, a diamond ring and several expensive pieces of clothing. I drove to Inglewood, checking into a motel which overlooked the high school. I drove around the immediate area for hours, looking for K.O.'s Ford Bronco parked at a motel. Giving up the search, I called Gretchen from my motel room and found out that K.O. had not called. I gave her the motel number and proceeded to drink myself to sleep.

Monday, January 21

I called the high school but was told that K.O. was out of town. I talked to his secretary, but she refused to say where he'd gone. I called Gretchen and asked her to do the same thing, but the secretary balked with her, too.

I drove to the office of the San Bernardino attorney who'd drawn up my will. Through a codicil I excluded Jerry and added K.O. and Gretchen.

Wednesday, January 23

Gretchen called to say that K.O. had started divorce proceedings and had come for more things. Yes, she'd given him the message—as well as a lecture—and no, he'd not responded either way.

That night, I vacantly watched television in the darkness of the motel room. I'd not eaten in two days and felt ill. A sportscaster had just announced that the popular, highly successful football coach, K.O. Porter of Inglewood's Gates High School had resigned effective immediately and taken the head coaching job at an obscure black school called Southeastern Georgia State College in Brandywine, Georgia. The announcer added that Brandywine was K.O.'s home town and that all his peers were shocked that he "threw away such a promising career by going there."

I finished my bottle of Scotch, drinking myself sober.

I wrote two letters:

Dear Eldon,

Well, it seemed like a good idea, having you with Jerry and K.O. on the side. The punishment for being a satyr seems a mite too severe, however. I guess that's what happens when you come out so late in life and realize you only have a few more years to go. Perhaps I should have stayed and duked it out, but the deck was stacked against me. Guess I'll chase a rainbow called K.O. and see where it takes me. Gretchen will fill you in.

Love, Barney

P.S. I didn't lie to you about the drink. The truth will come out some day.

P.P.S. I'll always love you.

And to K.O. in care of the college, I wrote:

Dear K.O.,

I figure that a month is plenty of time to get your head on straight, so I plan to be in Brandywine on February 22nd. That's a Friday. I'll stay a couple of days in the motel nearest your college. You'll recognize the van. Follow your heart.

Love, Barney

ELEVEN

RALPH

Thursday, January 24

Leaving Southern California at three in the morning, I felt a strong sense of deja vu. It was a lot like when I'd left Houston, only this time it seemed like a much greater loss. The further away I got, the more I felt that there was nothing for me in Georgia. So many times, I wanted to turn back, but something drove me on. If not K.O., then someone, I kept telling myself. But oh, Lordy, how I missed Eldon. I couldn't believe I'd lost him so easily.

At Eloy, Arizona, I pulled up to the restaurant where Eldon and I had first gotten to know each other. From my van, I watched an older couple sitting at that same booth near the window. A flood of memories came, and I could plainly see myself, looking at Eldon in childish wonder, as if the future held no betrayal—no broken hearts. I wept and drove on, finally stopping for the night in El Paso.

Saturday, January 26

By the time I reached Houston, I'd built a shell of oblivion around myself. If a painful memory surfaced, I would dispatch it to the depths of some murky memory bank.

I rented a motel room and immediately went on a tour of the video arcades. I prowled hungrily, aggressively, pouncing on any mature man that attracted me. I had a man's cock out before he could resist. As one middle-aged telephone lineman said as I went down on him just inside the booth door: "Goddamn, buddy, let me lock the door first!"

Sunday, January 27

It was an overcast morning in the high sixties. Sitting in the van, I watched the activity at a toilet in Memorial Park. I knew from my previous visit that men like me came by during the early morning hours before the area became crowded. I waited until a short, rugged blue-collar type parked his car several yards away and approached the toilet with vigilance and fear. I followed him inside, found him desperately horny, took him without a word . . . then watched him flee in panic.

A short time later, a man my age who looked dressed for church drove up in a luxury car and parked directly in front of the toilet. Looking around warily, he rushed inside. I followed on his heels and watched intently as he urinated. When he finished he looked up at me, prompting me to lick my lips and stare at his cock. Terrified, he started to zip up, but I gently fondled him. He tensed as I crouched and took him, my eyes locked on the entrance, my ears attuned to any sound of movement. He came almost instantly and pulled out prematurely. Looking helplessly at his still pumping cock, he quickly grabbed a wad of toilet paper and stuffed both inside his underwear. He uttered a terse thanks and left.

As the churchgoer reached the entrance, I heard another vehicle pull up in front, followed by a slammed car door and footsteps. In a voice charged with surprise and terror, the churchgoer said, "Hello, officer."

Having been informed by someone that the going rate for quickly getting out of a morals charge in Houston was a mere

$750.00, I held my ground and pretended to urinate at the trough. Besides, the cop hadn't caught us doing anything.

I was dumbfounded when a big man joined me at the trough. A sergeant in uniform, he was stocky and very attractive, about 55 or so with greying hair. *Is it possible?* I thought. *Nah! Get out, idiot!*

Instead of leaving, however, I chirped, "Good morning, officer," and brazenly looked down at his flaccid, urinating penis. I smiled at him and felt an immense surge of sexual desire. I could think of nothing more potent than having a brawny, mature cop in uniform.

"What, are you . . . nuts?" he asked, not smiling back. "I know you guys were getting it on. You want to be run in?"

I looked at his uniform again, and a detail surfaced from the last time I was in Houston. "You're not park police. You're metro."

"So?" he said defensively.

"You aren't working." I couldn't believe I was quarreling with a cop.

"I don't have to be on duty to make an arrest for loitering."

I frowned. "I just said 'good morning' to you. You must've had a bad night."

He looked down at my cock, which by now had turned flaccid. "You aren't pissing, Tiger. That means you're loitering."

I rolled up my eyes. "Okay, I'll leave. I just wanted to talk to someone because I have a lot of time on my hands and no one to talk to . . . . I find cops interesting. No big deal." I stuffed my cock inside my trousers and looked at his face again.

His lips formed a partial smile, but it wasn't big enough to change my mind about leaving the toilet.

I walked by an orange '82 Chevy pick-up parked in front and strode to my van. I glanced over my shoulder and saw him getting inside it.

After a pause, he started the truck and slowly drove around a picnic area adjacent to the parking lot. But instead of going on, he returned and parked next to me. He got out of the car without his hat and rested his elbows on the hood of his truck. His face was ruddy and round. Chest hair pushed out of the top of his uniform.

"Why don't you come inside and take a load off your feet?"

He looked up at me with a more relaxed look. Perhaps it was even a slightly beguiled look. He shook his head and looked down, then toward the toilet. "You're too much," he mumbled.

He sighed and walked around to the passenger side. Looking around as if watching for other police, he got inside and studied me, then the inside of the van. I could tell that he was intrigued. "I bet this really set you back. So what do you want to talk about?" The light hit him at just the right angle, exposing hazel eyes. And then I noticed his wedding band.

I pressed a seat release and swiveled in his direction. "How about life in general? Or specifically loneliness, betrayal . . . loss."

He looked at me seriously. "You sound like you're carrying around a lot of baggage."

I shrugged. "My wife was killed last April, and I decided to do an about face. I'm trying to make up for over forty years of suppression."

He nodded toward the toilet. "By hanging out in sewers like that?"

"I met *you* there."

"What makes you think you'll get any more than a five minute conversation out of me?"

"Maybe that five minutes will mean a lot to to me. You don't have to suck a man's cock to experience him."

He seemed astonished. Maybe he was moved, too. It was hart to tell.

"You're just as lonely as I am," I ventured.

He smirked good-naturedly. "It shows?"

"No, but I sense it, I guess." It felt good being with him. "Why do *you* go in that place?

"I've seen too many decent people pulled out of there by these goddamn park police assholes." He stared at the toilet. "Senior men, married with families . . . grandkids. Men who came out late in life, like you. Men who don't know where else to go to find someone to be intimate with."

"Men like you?" I offered, hoping.

"Maybe." He glanced at me. "Anyway, I go in there and clear 'em out, scare 'em away. I'd rather them be frustrated and horny than face a morals charge. All that suffering and alienation from their families."

"I assume the park police don't take too kindly to your crusade."

He chuckled. "They hate my guts, but there's nothing they can do as long as I don't directly interfere with them."

"By the way, my name's Barney Wilkinson."

He looked at me and seemed to hesitate. "Ralph Dodd."

"You do this every day, Ralph?"

"Only when I work nights. I'm a desk sergeant at central division. I get off, make the rounds for a couple of hours. The older men usually disappear before the young ones start cruising."

"Your compassion doesn't include the younger guys, huh?" I was careful not to sound challenging.

"I got called 'pops' and made fun of once too often by these young faggots."

"So now you've gravitated to more mature types." I hoped that I didn't seem to press.

He didn't answer. Instead, he nodded toward a distant police car heading our way.

"I got my share of insults too, because I really don't have any particular age preference." He glanced at me, then resumed tracking the park police car.

"They got this new magazine now that gets mature men fixed up with all ages that like mature men."

"Yeah, I heard of it," he said, watching the police car turn into the parking lot with its back doors wide open. "*Mature Men*. Never saw a copy of it though."

"I have a copy in the back of the van," I said, watching the police car drive slowly by the toilet. I saw one cop behind the wheel and two in the back seat.

"Watch how they work," said Ralph.

Passing by the toilet, the back seat duo quietly hopped out on either side of the car . Moving on grass, the team approached the toilet and rushed inside. The driver stopped the squad car and waited for the results.

"Lord, have mercy," I murmured.

"They got motorcycle officers who kill their motors and coast up behind the john, too," he added.

The two cops came out of the toilet empty-handed and got back inside the squad car. They departed for their next raid.

"So how about letting me look at that magazine," he said, watching the squad car disappear.

I ducked into the back and pulled out my last copy from

a box of books and magazines. I heard the sound of door locks being depressed and smiled. Turning around with the magazine in my hand, I found him right behind me. He was taking off his belt, holster and cuffs.

Excited, I immediately got an erection and sat down on the bed, patting it invitingly.

He sat next to me and took the magazine.

I watched him as he thumbed through the publication, looking wide-eyed at photos of older men in the nude and younger men who were looking for older men. "Unbelievable," he mumbled, rubbing his crotch.

"Keep it. Get a post office box and subscribe."

His hands began to tremble as he placed the magazine in the passenger seat. "Thanks. Of course, I'll have to keep it hidden in the car because of the family."

"Of course," I whispered, groping him.

He quivered and gasped. Instantly aroused, he began kissing me hungrily, pushing me down on the bed. His mouth tasted clean, as if he'd been chewing minty gum.

I was dumbfounded yet delighted. I felt swept away in a sort of spontaneous ecstasy and responded passionately.

He pulled away and looked at me with an expression of sheer joy that I found exhilarating . . . until I saw his wedding band again and realized that I was on the verge of slipping into quicksand.

But I had no control of my emotions. All the sadness and tears had taken a toll on me, and all I wanted was a romantic interlude, even if it was for only a couple of hours. *I'll be pragmatic and rational later*, I promised myself.

"Not here," he said breathlessly. "Do you have a place?"

"A motel about three miles away."

"Go!" he ordered.

I made my way to the driver's seat as he clamored into the passenger seat. "What about your truck?"

"Leave it there," he said. "I'm low on gas anyway."

As I quickly drove to the motel, he skimmed through the magazine. He looked like a man who had just found a way out of his dead-end existence.

Rushing inside the motel room, we made love in a way I'd not experienced since the early days with Eldon. He was a perfect lover, a man intent upon exploring all avenues of foreplay, even though both of us had to back away many times from premature climaxes. He loved to kiss and fondle gently. He enjoyed pinning my arms down as he just looked over my chest and face, occasionally biting and licking a nipple. And when it was time, we engaged in a gentle sixty-nine.

His cock was small and uncircumcised and surrounded by a dense bush of pubic hair which seemed to sweep up to his neck. In light of the dense hair on his back, he reminded me of a silverback gorilla with the face of a handsome, extraordinarily masculine man.

Unable to hold back, I easily swallowed his cock and balls and kneaded his shank with my tongue. He gasped and tried to pull away, but I held on, feeling my own testicles churning.

His entire body shook as his cock squirted salty jissom into all the crevices of my mouth. I moaned a warning, and he went all the way down on me, allowing my load to rush down his throat.

The afterglow was like floating serenely in a lagoon such as the one at Carlos' villa. I held his cock inside my mouth, delighting in an occasional drop of late-arriving semen or an aftershock shudder. He did the same, and we stayed that way for at least fifteen minutes.

With a silly grin on his face, he struggled to sit up in bed. "I have to piss," he announced, getting out of bed and staggering to the bathroom. "Know any good excuse I can give to the wife? God, is she going to be pissed!"

I listened to his urine hitting the water in the commode, and suddenly felt depressed. "There's always a dead end, isn't there?" I whispered to myself.

Dropping him off at his truck, I watched as he drove off with a smile and a wave. I followed him to the parking lot exit and waved as he turned right and I turned left. Driving slowly, I looked in the rear-view mirror as his truck turned down a street near the end of the park instead of heading for a major thoroughfare a couple of blocks further. Curious to see if he lived near the park, I turned the van around and drove to the street. Afraid that he would spot the van, I slowly drove past it and looked for an orange truck. Glimpsing an orange vehicle about two blocks away, I turned the van around again and drove down the side street to the end of the first block. Sitting in the driveway of a house in the middle of the next block was an '82 Chevy pick-up. It was Ralph's.

Feeling frustrated, I went to a bath and spent the next six hours watching the sexual frenzy there before I allowed someone to go down on me. To my amazement, I couldn't even get an erection.

Monday, January 28

He arrived at the motel just after eight, showering me with kisses and pushing me toward the bed. Without saying a word, he took me to a level of ecstasy I'd not often experienced. Every touch, every kiss did its work on me and changed my entire attitude on the subject of romance. I realized that with Ralph, there would never be multiple climaxes, because lovemaking to him was like a Wagnerian aria. The passion elevated slowly, easily, until it became unbearable. A climax would no longer be like a cymbal crash. Instead, it would become a giant roller in the ocean, crashing onto the beach with incredible power, reaching further and further until it was spent.

We lay entwined in each other's arms. I had successfully voided my brain of everything unpleasant and was searching for an appropriate fantasy island on which to frolic with Ralph. I had escaped thoughts of K.O. and Eldon.

"I love you, Barney," Ralph said. "I really love you, man."

And then it all came crashing down on me.

"I've never been so happy in my life," he went on, hugging me tightly and kissing me.

I felt a stomach-churning anxiety and jumped to the corner of the bed.

"What's wrong?" Ralph moved next to me and tried to look into my eyes.

I stood up and walked to the bathroom. "Nothing. I have to piss." I walked into the bathroom and threw water on my face.

"Are you sick?" Ralph asked from the bathroom door.

I looked at him dully and wiped my face with a towel. "I think we'd better talk, Ralph."

I went to a chair next to the window and sat down. He took the other chair and looked at me with alarm.

"That baggage you detected?"

He nodded.

"It includes a lot of hard lessons, one being, 'Do not get involved with a married man.' Another is, 'Do not make commitments you can't keep.' And then there is, "Do not settle down in Houston.'"

It was as though I had slapped him. "My wife and I haven't slept together in over five years, Barney. We're only living together out of convenience, and even that's wearing thin. She's sloppy and doesn't groom herself. She's turned into a shrew. I can't get her to work, and we need the money to help out my daughter who has ovarian cancer. I'd leave her in a minute if I had someone to stick by me."

"Do I detect a little encouragement? What are you trying to say?"

"Just that." He showed irritation for the first time. "I'll do what's best for *me*, not her."

I didn't know what to say. On the one hand, he scared me to death, but on the other, he appeared to be the man I'd always wanted. If he was for real, I certainly didn't want to lose him.

"And as far as commitment is concerned," he continued, "all I said was that I loved you." He looked at me sincerely. "It's a start. So let's see where it goes."

"Okay," I said at length, deciding not to tell him that I would be making a decision very soon about whether to stay or move on to Georgia.

He got up and began putting on his uniform. "Do you think you could love me?"

"Very much so," I said softly. "But I have to be sure."

"Fair enough."

"Will I see you tomorrow?" I asked.

He smiled broadly. "I'm off tomorrow night, and the wife's driving to Texas City to take our daughter for radiation treatments. Since she's spending the night there, you'll see quite a bit of me tomorrow."

I felt consoled and watched as he finished dressing.

He walked to me and kneeled between my legs, kissing me tenderly. "I'll see you right after she leaves—about nine, I think. Okay?"

"I can't wait," I said, kissing him back.

He walked to the door and stared at me longingly. "My love," he said, slipping out the door.

I sat immobile for several minutes, convincing myself to give him a couple of weeks to prove that he was on the level.

That afternoont I drove to the big arcade off the Gulf Freeway, but I just couldn't go inside. Instead, I took in two movies at the Galleria.

Tuesday, January 29

He arrived at 9:45 and swept me off my feet like he'd done before. Instead of getting stale, our lovemaking got much, much better. The man had a knack for keeping me in a perpetual state of ecstasy.

We went out for lunch at a small, elegant restaurant on Westheimer in Gay Town and sipped martinis while gazing into each other's eyes. I felt like a young man in love for the first time.

"Doris and I had a big fight last night," he said with a big sigh. "The subject of divorce came up for the first time in our marriage."

"What was the fight about?" I asked, slightly drunk from the martinis.

"Money . . . . Jealousy. She thinks I'm having an affair with a woman because I've been late the past two mornings. And I'm pissed that she won't work to help out with our daughter's medical bills. Julia's a single mother who's trying to work and support a kid. She has no insurance. Man, I tell you it's eating me up alive." Tears came to his eyes.

"What did you tell your wife about the affair?"

"I didn't admit it, but I didn't deny it, either." He squeezed my hand. "I think it'll all come to a head when she comes home tomorrow afternoon."

I smiled. "You mean you're going to spend the night with me?"

"You bet." He ran his fingers through my hair, wiping away all my fears and doubts. I was indeed quite infatuated with him and was prepared to give him a large sum of money to help out with his daughter.

That night, we celebrated by visiting some of the bars he'd once frequented. We went into a couple of loud dance bars and were glared at by the young clientele. I concluded that the very sight of grey hair somehow put a damper on their mood. Later, we went into a very popular bar on Greenbriar which catered to an older crowd, and I began to enjoy myself. The square bar was loaded with several hunky older men, who seemed to be very excited about two new faces.

After consuming our seventh or eighth cocktail of the day, I excused myself and walked into the men's room. One of the men from the other side of the bar came in right behind me and stood at the next urinal. While gawking at my cock, he struck up a small-talk conversation, which continued as we came back out. Hearing him say, "Oh, my gay nerves," I glanced around in time to see him gesturing to his friend about how well-hung I was.

I chuckled and looked at Ralph, who didn't share my mirth. He seemed upset.

"What did you do?" he asked as I sat down.

"When?" I was confused.

"I want to go," he said, abruptly getting off his stool and walking to the exit.

I quickly pulled out a couple of dollar bills for a tip and followed him out to the van.

"What's wrong, Ralph?" I asked, catching up with him.

"You were playing around with him, weren't you?"

"Who, the guy that followed me inside the john?"

"Yeah, him. Did you let him go down on you?"

"Of course not," I soothed, suddenly finding myself on shaky ground again. I unlocked the door for him and went around to the driver's side. Voices seemed to come from within my head, urging me to leave and get away from him.

But the voices subsided after we arrived at the motel and began making passionate love again. He apologized for his behavior and blamed it on the liquor.

That night, we fell asleep in each other's arms.

Wednesday, January 30

Solemnly telling me that he had to meet his wife at home in the early afternoon to "bring things to a head," he kissed me for a long time and left, promising to see me the next morning after his shift was up.

Leaving the motel only once to eat lunch and allow the

maid to clean the room, I spent the day watching television and talking to my North Carolina investment banker and attorney on the phone. I found that my net worth had increased substantially.

I decided to offer to pay the daughter's medical bills as an inducement for Ralph to divorce his wife. Hell, I was even willing to pay for the divorce. I knew it was crazy, but I was prepared to *buy* him. That's how badly I wanted him.

Thursday, January 31

He never showed up that morning, and I began to worry about what might have happened between him and his wife. I had visions of her shooting him with a shotgun.

Knowing that going to his house could have disastrous consequences, I dialed every Ralph Dodd in the telephone book, but got nowhere. I called information and found that there were two that were unlisted.

Drinking to quell the anxiety, I only felt worse. When nightfall came, I tried to sleep, but it was impossible. I allowed myself to recapture the memory of the van-in-the-desert dream. Without so much as a shudder, I coolly embellished the vision to include a luxury motor home. The pop sound became a loud boom. And when the coyote investigated the open door, he found a fourteen gauge shotgun instead of a pistol. The scene was much too gory even for a coyote.

I realized what I was doing to myself and became wired. Unable to sit still, I left the motel and walked aimlessly. Through the silent, dark streets of Houston, I walked until I knew what I had to do.

Friday, February 1

At two in the morning, I called the HPD central division and asked for Sergeant Dodd. The operator said that they had no Sergeant Dodd and asked if I wanted to talk to the desk sergeant. I said that I did.

"Sergeant Velasquez." A gruff man's voice.

"Yeah, I'm trying to locate a Sergeant Ralph Dodd. I thought that he was the desk sergeant there."

"Ralph Dodd?"

"Yeah."

"No Ralph Dodd working in Central, man. I ain't ever heard of no Sergeant Dodd. Maybe he's at one of the other divisions."

"No . . . I . . . I must have his name wrong." Devastated, I hung up.

Knowing that the discovery of just one lie usually meant the existence of several more, I felt betrayed. My anxiety was soon replaced by depression, but I was unable to fall sleep.

As the sun rose, I sat inside my van, which was parked three houses away from the old, two-story house with the orange truck parked in front. Soon there was enough light to read the shingle hanging from the bottom of the mail box. It said: "Joe & Betty Harvester."

I wanted desperately to believe that he'd only given me a phony name out of fear. I wanted to forgive him and believe in him, but somehow I knew that I had been terribly disillusioned. I had to know one way or another, and so I sat patiently, waiting to see something—anything—which would shed some light on what kind of man he really was.

Just before seven, a pleasant-looking middle-aged woman came out of the house in a bathrobe. She picked up a rolled newspaper on the sidewalk and went back into the house. Even in a bathrobe, she looked stylish.

At ten past eight, a younger woman pulled up in front of the house in a Chrysler New Yorker. She honked, bringing out the middle-aged woman, now fully dressed and groomed. The older woman rushed to the passenger side and lifted out a toddler, carrying the child back to the driver's side. She fussed over the child like a proud grandmother, which she no doubt was.

Seconds later, an HPD squad car pulled up behind the Chrysler and Ralph, dressed in his uniform, got out on the passenger side. He waved good-bye to his partner, who did a U-turn and sped away.

Ralph bellowed something in baby talk and took hold of his grandchild. Kissing the toddler, he bent down to kiss his daughter, then lovingly placed his arm around his wife, kissing her as well. He seemed so very happy.

Soon there were farewells, and the young woman drove away in my direction. As she passed by me, I could see that she was healthy-looking and dressed like a female executive. Ralph placed his grandchild upon his big shoulder and began marching toward the front porch. His wife followed, holding on to his belt. She said something which caused him to laugh robustly. She laughed, too, and looked toward me. Even from such a distance, I could see that her face projected profound joy and contentment.

I numbly started the van and drove toward them. As Ralph walked inside, his wife walked to the end of the porch and picked up an empty flower pot.

"You got to go back out?" she asked, loud enough for both Ralph and me to hear.

"Yeah," he yelled back. "Only about two, three hours after I have a bite to eat."

"Oh, I wish you didn't have to work all that overtime," she said, shaking her head. "Take some eggs out of the fridge and I'll be . . . "

Her voice trailed off as I drove on by.

At 9:15, Joe Harvester, alias Ralph, arrived at the motel and explained that his wife had met him at the station when he got off the previous morning. She'd fought with him all the way home, he said. He sadly explained that she had refused to give him a divorce. He asked me to give him a little more time to break away from her.

"You won't abandon me now, will you?" he asked meekly, with no hint of deceit.

"Of course not, Ralph," I answered, looking at him lovingly, trying my best not to give away my true feelings. *And what were my true feelings?* I felt foolish, primarily, although he'd been so incredibly convincing. It was painfully obvious just how naive I really was. I had no personality of my own and knew that I quickly had to find the real me. It was time to stop being a chameleon for anyone who gave me a second look. "Are you going to make love to me, Ralph?"

"I . . . I can't this morning, Barney." He looked down sadly, stealing a glance at his watch. "She's so upset; I think she might try to take her life." He looked up and sighed.

I locked onto his eyes and could see that the look of regret was masking a growing anxiety. *Running late for your next tryst, my sweet?* I thought, almost laughing. I could plainly see his living-on-the-edge game. It had been there all the time. I shuddered to think of how many men like me he was juggling. "Then, go, Ralph," I insisted. "She needs you now. I'll be here when you need me."

He tenderly kissed me on the lips and blinked his eyes in longing like a bad actor.

As he slipped out the door, I felt relieved and vowed to find myself.

TWELVE

REX & TODD

Saturday, February 9

Over the following seven days, I'd discovered southeast Texas and western Louisiana by spending time in Galveston, Beaumont, Port Arthur and Lake Charles. I never felt more lonely or sexually frustrated in my life. There were no arcades like those in Houston, and the parks and rest stops were just too dangerous and seedy.

Eventually reaching Lafayette, Louisiana, I pulled off the freeway into the Charlie Guidry Mobil station where I'd stopped the previous spring. I looked for the Cajun owner and watched with childish delight as he rushed to wait on me at the full-service island. It was like seeing an old friend. He looked a little older, but that ruddy complexion and those green eyes were just as endearing. His Cajun accent was still just as maddeningly sexy.

I asked all kinds of questions to extend my time with him and requested he check everything imaginable on the van. I drooled over his mighty hands and thick fingers. My heart pounded at the sight of his genital imprint, bulging from his top left thigh, just like before. I became intoxicated by the smell of cheap after-shave lotion, along with a hint of oil and gasoline.

Paying him, I moved the van to a parking area and went inside the rest room, intent upon masturbating. I washed the grime off my face and was drying off when the Charlie walked inside. *Had my intense desire for him somehow created some kind of sexual mirage?* I wondered. No, I was in bad shape, but not *that* bad. *Did he sense my hunger and want me to quickly take him?* No, it was definitely a coincidence. He probably pissed in this room four or five times a day, I rationally thought. As he pulled out his thick, long cock, my face felt like it was burning and my throat became dry. A thick stream of clear urine gushed into the urinal, and I found myself wishing that I was underneath the rush of piss. The thought embarrassed me, yet excited me.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained, I thought, before blurting with a quavering voice: "Hey, Charlie, where'd you get a dick like that? At a plastic surgeon's?"

He laughed. "No, cher, dah good Lord stahted makin' me a tird leg, but he done run outta meat."

I laughed with him. "I'd give my left arm to suck that."

The stream of urine stopped. "Come back on dat?" He smiled courteously, probably hoping that he'd misunderstood me.

"I said that I would love to suck your cock," I said evenly, without a hint of shyness or fear.

His ruddy face became blood-red in embarrassment; he hastily stuffed the giant appendage away, creating a large wet spot on his tan work pants. "Hey, I don't do dat ting, cher." He turned and smiled cordially. "Flattered, dough. Come back, now." He walked out, patting me on the shoulder.

The heat from his hand on my shoulder, the reverberation of his dialect, the memory of his penis as its urethra snapped shut, his civility—all of it pushed me over the top. I rushed to the booth and joyously sprayed my load into the commode as the entire men's room scene played over in my mind: his unexpected entrance, the thick stream of urine, the shock of what I'd said, the friendly turn-down. And as I braced myself with one hand on the tile wall and milked the residue from my cock, my warped mind created a cartoon penis that stopped urinating and looked at me.

"Come back on dat?" said Charlie Guidry and his cock in unison.

Since my fateful date with K.O. was just less than two weeks away, I decided to see what Lafayette could offer as a diversion before trying Baton Rouge. At a motel within sight of Guidry's Mobil Service, the desk clerk told me that Mardi Gras was coming up and that the Acadiana Region Mardi Gras was almost as fun as New Orleans. I'd always heard that during Mardi Gras, people sort of lost their inhibitions, so I decided to stay in Lafayette for a while and see if I could figure out a way to seduce Charlie.

The word "obsession" popped into my mind and frightened me.

As I'd done in Houston, I bought a map and circled the parks, but soon found that they were not a good source for my type. According to a weirdly dressed younger man on a Kawasaki bike who came on to me in one of the parks, there were no baths or video arcades. The only sources of gay entertainment, he said, were two young-crowd bars, a very dangerous (cops) men's toilet in a department store, and two very dangerous (cops and criminals) rest stops on Interstate 10 just east of Lafayette.

I drove to the department store and checked out the toilet.

Walking past four doorless stalls occupied by stone-faced younger men, I stood before one of three urinals and waited. For nearly twenty minutes, I stood there while a succession of six men walked up the next urinal and looked hungrily at my cock. None of them turned me on.

As dusk fell, I drove to a package store and bought new bottles of Bombay gin and Johnny Walker Red Scotch to offset a mounting depression. I masturbated to the image of Charlie Guidry and figured that he was probably impossible to seduce anyway.

After two martinis, I ordered a club sandwich from room service. While waiting for my sandwich to arrive, I came upon at a brilliant idea: I would go to New Orleans for Mardi Gras.

Sunday, February 10

I made it only as far as the east-bound rest stop. It was the only place in the area I'd not checked out, so I thought that I would give it at least a couple of hours. I parked the van away from the rest rooms and watched the activity in and out.

At first, I couldn't spot any cruising activity, but slowly it became evident. Two trucks were parked at the far curb and both were idling. A few cars, a camper and another van were parked at an angle against the inner curb. Just outside the men's room, I could see a young man inside a camper, watching the toilet like a vulture. Next to him was a white Corvette with another young man—this one obviously lusting after the man in the camper. At the other far end, there was a brown Ford van with what appeared to be an older man inside.

A young, grimy trucker with long, stringy, blond hair

walked out of the men's room and made a telephone call at a nearby walk-up phone. Soon, another equally grimy older trucker came out and waited around for the other to complete his call. With that, the man in the Corvette got out and walked to the men's room, giving the man in the camper an obvious "come on" look.

The call completed, both truckers walked across to their similar rigs and moved on. Two automobiles with families inside also took off, leaving behind just the Corvette, the camper, the brown van and me. The man in the camper followed the other man inside, and I wished them a good fuck.

I detected movement out of the corner of my vision and saw a grey-haired, stocky man with glasses getting out of the other van. As he moved closer, I could see that he was in his early sixties and short—no more than five-foot-three or so. His face had a ruddy, outdoor complexion like that of Charlie Guidry.

"Oh, let 'em be," I mumbled as the man appeared to be heading for the toilet.

But he walked past and ambled toward me, looking up and smiling as he got close. I returned the smile and winked.

The man nodded toward the rest room and said, "Dey been waitin' I don know how many hours fo dat."

I watched as another car pulled in. "Yeah, and they'll have to wait some more, looks like."

"Naw, cher. Dey be *primed*, you know? Dey probly cum all over demselves de first lick." He chuckled.

I laughed and gave the little Cajun a good going over. "You sound like you're from around here."

"No shit," he said in mock wonderment. "Where you from, now?"

"North Carolina."

"You don sound like you from no North Carolina."

I surveyed his mischievous, sparkling brown eyes and well-groomed, almost white hair. "I moved around a lot in the navy. I don't know my accent from my ass."

"Oh, well now, I sho do like dem sailors."

"And I sho do like dat accent," I countered. "What does 'cher' mean, anyway?" I pronounced it as close as I could to the way Charlie Guidry had pronounced it: "sheah."

The man's lips formed a dazzling smile. "It's spelled C-H-E-R, like the singer. Means 'dear' in French. Just a standard Cajun greetin'. No big ting."

As a man and woman got out of the car and headed toward the rest rooms, the two men exited the men's room, quickly heading in opposite directions. One nervously checked his fly and appeared flushed. The other wiped his lips unconsciously and frantically looked around the area. My little friend and I chuckled.

As the Cajun watched the young men get into their cars and drive off, I studied him more closely. I figured that he weighed about 170 pounds and, judging from the texture and size of his hands, he probably did a lot of manual labor.

"Mercy, look at dem two fly," he said, looking back at me and noticing that his crotch was being admired. "Lot of fire down dere, cher. You figure you can handle a lotta heat?"

"Goddamn right," I said, unlocking the passenger door.

"Cops be pretty nasty here. You follow me." With that, he smiled, licked his lips, winked and strode to his van.

I followed him east on the freeway to an exit which read "Breaux Bridge." The name sounded familiar. And then I remembered while passing the opposite way the previous spring: the rainbow . . . the haunting feeling that I would come back.

The Cajun led me through the downtown to a levee, where he turned south and drove to the village's outskirts. The brown van soon pulled into a driveway in front of a modest-looking house. I saw movement inside and reluctantly got out when the Cajun gestured grandly for me to come in. By the time I'd reached the house, he was holding the door open, talking to someone in a strange French-sounding language—Cajun French, I suspected.

Standing next to a kitchen bar was a man built like Eldon. He was about the same age as the smaller man and had short, grey hair. He wore a beige jump suit and exposed a fair-sized basket. But his expression was intriguing and tore my gaze from his crotch. His smile was sweet and gentle. His eyes were metallic, baby blue . . . and sightless.

"Do you mind?" the little guy asked me. "He go to de back if you don want no tree-way."

I was still stunned over the blind man. "Uh . . . of course not . . . . You're both a turn-on."

The little man smiled, relieved. "Toddy, dis's . . . "

I quickly moved toward the blind man and grabbed his outstretched hand. "Barney . . . . My name's Barney Wilkinson."

"Todd Guidry. Nice to meet you, Barney," he said with only a mild Cajun accent.

I felt a jolt of electricity as I grasped his hand. "Any relation to Charlie Guidry at the Mobil station off I-Ten?"

"Guidrys are a dime a dozen around here. I've heard of him, but I don't think we're related that close."

"And I'm ole Rex Monton," said the shorter man.

I released Todd's hand and turned to shake Rex's.

"Barney, would you care for some coffee or tea? Got some stronger stuff, if you want," said Todd.

"Coffee'll be fine," I said.

"Have a seat, cher," said Rex, pointing toward a chair at the kitchen table.

I did so and Rex sat next to me, placing his big, rough hand on my crotch. I shuddered and jumped.

"Goddamn, Toddy, dis boy be goosey."

Todd laughed as he poured Barney's coffee without spilling a drop. "Forgive him, Barney. He's all hands, but he's lovable."

I chuckled. "That's all right. I'm pretty bad with my hands, too."

"Oh, yeah?" Rex grabbed my hand and placed it on his crotch. "Well, put it here, den."

I felt his crotch and became aroused at the feel of a thickening cock with very large balls.

Todd turned and took four careful steps to the table. As he placed the coffee in front of me, Rex reached out and groped him.

"Dis is the king, dough." Rex again grabbed my hand and pulled it up to grope Todd, who good-naturedly stood still while I fondled him.

I shuddered again as I felt the outline of an impressive handful of soft flesh. "Oh, Lordy," I croaked.

Forgoing our coffee, we went into a back bedroom and quickly stripped.

"Barney's got grey hair and he's about our age," said Rex to Todd. "Handsome devil, too, Toddy. Blue eyes. Some hurt in dem eyes, too. He needs some lovin', Toddy."

The Cajun couple placed me in the middle of the bed and started working on me at both ends. Rex kissed me hungrily, dropping down from time to time to chew on my tits. Todd sucked my cock and balls. But I couldn't keep my eyes

off the two neglected cocks and wished that I could suck them both. I sat up and gently pushed Todd off me.

"Let's put Todd in the middle for a while," I suggested, rolling Todd onto his back. "Lord, have mercy," I said, looking down at the awesome cock. I estimated it to be at least eight inches around and seven inches long.

Rex straddled Todd's face and slipped his six-inch-round cock into Todd's mouth, watching as I took out my upper plate and swallowed Todd's. Rex squealed with glee. "Goddamn, Toddy. How long's it been?"

Todd excitedly groaned something, but it was incoherent.

I stayed down on Todd as I held both lime-sized balls, squeezing them.

"Gimme some of you, cher," pleaded Rex, motioning for me to turn around.

I reversed myself and again buried my face into Todd's crotch. Then I felt the hot wetness of Rex's mouth as it feasted on me. We had formed a triangle.

Sucking wildly, we grunted and snorted in uninhibited pleasure. Todd arched his back and began pummeling my face with his heavy balls. I squeezed the balls in response, inducing him to frenzy. From my own crotch, I felt Rex's face pounding into my abdomen, taking every inch with ease. Judging from Rex's growls, I surmised that he was likewise enraptured.

And then the magic moment came. Todd's legs flexed hard and his spasms shook the bed. His semen swirled into my mouth, filling it. As if on cue, Rex came, causing Todd to choke and pull off his cock. I quickly grabbed Rex's cock and jacked it as it shot jissom over Todd's chest.

Exhausted, Rex rolled over onto his back, and I began to masturbate. While I stroked myself, I slowly let Todd's dying cock slip out of my mouth and stared at it, my eyes no further than six inches away. A tremor rolled through Todd's body and the big cock seemed to ripple. Then a pearl of clear liquid appeared at the head, and my load spilled over my hand as I claimed it with my tongue.

I sat at the kitchen table, sipping a cup of tea and watching Todd chop onions and green peppers. Rex had gone out "to the sto to get some tings to make etoufee and gumbo," giving me a chance to find out what had happened to Todd's sight.

"I was downright stupid, that's what it was," he said after I mustered the nerve to ask him. "I had all kinds of warnin' from doctors about my blood sugar level. I didn't take my pills like I was supposed to. Hell, it was my fault." He finished chopping one onion and started on another, his eyes watering. "Now, I've lost my sight and have to take insulin. Rex goes over me with a fine-tooth comb about once a week, just to see if I got a cut or bruise. I even go to a podiatrist every few months, 'cause circulation problems start there usually."

"Are both of you retired?" I asked, amazed at how Todd knew exactly where everything was.

"Yeah. I worked for the post office. Rex, he was a Lafayette police detective."

I thought of Ralph and felt a short wave of nausea, which passed.

Todd chuckled. "You know, I met that little fucker twenty-six years ago. He'd never been with a man before, and he was married with four kids. I used to deliver mail to them." He stopped and turned toward me, melting me with his ethereal smile. "It all happened so fast . . . . I had this registered package for them, and when I knocked on the door, he called for me to come in. Seems that he'd called in sick that day to take care of his youngest boy, and his wife and other kids were away some place. Well, here he was on the phone without a stitch of clothes on, motionin' for me to carry the box over to where he was. Well, I took one look at that compact little body and it was love at first sight—couldn't keep my eyes off that short, fat dick of his." He laughed. "I tell you . . . I guess he was flabbergasted that I was lookin' at his cock so hard, and he started getting excited before he had a chance to think about it. And just as quick, I reached down and started playin' with it. Hell, I knew he was a cop, but I must have gone crazy. So, shameful hussy that I am, I laid down my bag and went down on him. Hell, he's on the *phone* talkin', it turns out, to his *wife*, and here I am goin' apeshit over his peter. That little fucker came and came and came . . . . And after he hung up the phone, instead of feeling guilty—cause I know it was the first time ever—why, he wanted another one ten minutes later.

"Created a monster, that's what I did! He fell head over heels in love with me and got to where he would call me every night and want to see me every other night. And, of course, I was already crazy about him, so I didn't try to stop him. Well, to make a long story short, they ended up getting a divorce. Thank God, she never knew the real reason he went limp with her. I suppose she knows the situation now, but we're all friends and she's been married again for over twenty years. The kids are all grown and married and have kids of their own. Rex is Grampa and I'm Uncle Toddy."

I heard a car door slam. "So when did you move out here?"

"Oh, we've been here about four years now. It was to get away from the family more than anything else. Got to where the grandkids would just drop in, or the kids would want us to baby-sit. They're too lazy to drive out here, so it's a lot more peaceful."

Rex brought in two bags of groceries. "You two been doin' any fuckin' without me?"

"Wouldn't think of it," I said. "Wouldn't be the same without you." I groped him as he walked by.

"Keep it up, boy, and I trow you to de flo and suck dem balls dry," warned Rex.

"No you won't either," snapped Todd. "Get over here and hang your tits over this stove. I've already done my part."

"Okay, Big Daddy." Rex began putting away groceries, then smiled and winked at me.

I found it amazing that both men's smiles had such a profound effect on me. It was frightening to think that I could too easily fall in love with both of them, given the emotional condition I was in. While Rex described a cruisy encounter at the grocery store, I studied Todd, who sat next to me. I admired the round, handsome face and incredible eyes. I felt excited by the open shirt, which exposed auburn chest hair and succulent pecs. I turned my attention to Rex, who moved with a cocky, masculine gait. I watched as the big hands expertly peeled and de-veined shrimp.

"Chef Rex's gonna make etoufee so good it'll make yo tongue lap yo brains out! Talk about *good*!"

"I was just telling Barney our life story," said Todd.

"Bet dat didn't take long, did it?"

I laughed. "I think it's a beautiful story."

Rex turned to look at me; he abruptly looked very wise and compassionate. It was a totally different expression, and it startled me at first. "I want to hear your story, cher. You sho be a hurtin' man." He stopped what he was doing and maintained his gaze on me.

"Maybe he don't want to tell his story, Rex. Knock it off, now. You're embarrassin' him," chided Todd.

I sighed.

"You gotta know by now dat you with friends, boy," assured Rex.

I suddenly felt very safe and secure. I wanted to purge my soul and tell these wonderful men my story. "You got a couple of hours?"

Rex put dinner aside and joined us at the table.

For the next hour or so, I told all about Jerry, Eldon, K.O., Carlos and "Ralph." Upon finishing, I began to break down and felt the comforting arms of both men. They held on to me until I composed myself.

Rex got up and continued making dinner. "Toddy, dis boy's gonna stay with us for a while."

Monday, February 18

I stayed on, but kept an eye on the calendar and my "date" with an ultimatum in Georgia. My visit seemed to greatly inspire Todd and Rex, who took me everywhere, including the Atchafalaya Swamp, the old sugar plantations and all the historical Acadiana attractions. As it got closer to Mardi Gras time, they told of wild parties and parades. And if I really wanted to, there was a friend in New Orleans who could put us up down there, "but cher, day ain't nuttin done dere we can't do up here."

And, of course, Rex was right. They took me to parties in Baton Rouge and Lake Charles and even places like Plaquemine, Opelousas and Abbeville. On the eve of Fat Tuesday, Rex took us to a party on the outskirts of Lafayette, near Breaux Bridge. He warned me that the host, a very wealthy Cuban, would try to outdo everyone else each year and that I should be prepared for something fantastic.

The house was huge and opulent, sitting isolated amidst a clump of giant live oaks. Cars were parked everywhere and loud Latin music blared from the house. Rex explained that the host, a 55-year-old oil man, decided on a Brazilian Carnival motif that year.

Inside, it was as if we had been transported to Rio during their Mardi Gras. Samba music was playing wildly and as one piece finished, the drums would maintain the cadence until another piece started. Further inside, I could see a ten-piece band providing the music and a swaying, dancing mass of men, nearly all dressed in wild costumes.

With a big smile on his face, Todd held on to Rex as he led us through the crowd toward the back and a huge patio. I held on to Todd from the rear.

Although it was almost as crowded, there was less dancing on the patio, and there was a cool breeze. Finding an outside bar, Rex and I had cocktails while Todd had orange juice. We stood on the fringe, and Rex softly described the scene to Todd, who marveled at the description.

Rex winked at me. "You try it. I gotta go to de john." He rushed off to a bathroom just inside the house.

As I tried my hand at "color commentary," Todd held me tightly, his warmth and chemistry drawing me closer. At that point, I knew that I was in danger of falling in love with a couple and becoming doomed to repeat a grave error. Granted, I wasn't the type to pull a "Jerry," but I didn't believe that such a relationship was in my best interest. Still, I couldn't pull away. One look at Rex's comical, sincere expression or Todd's ethereal eyes, and I was hooked, at least for the moment.

A petite man in wildly colorful drag walked up to us. "Toddy, baby, how *are* you?" he said with a Hispanic accent.

Todd smiled. "Who is it?" he asked, extending his hand toward the man's face. Feeling the face, he exclaimed, "Tony!" He drew the little man to his chest and hugged him.

"Where is Rex, cruising the john?" Tony asked, checking out my crotch. "Hi," he said alluringly.

"Hi." I struggled not to laugh.

"This is Tony, Barney. He's been a friend of ours for a long time." I felt Tony's dress. "Charming. Is it a Mackey?"

Tony gently slapped my hand. "Do I look like a queen who can afford a Mackey gown?" He glanced at my crotch again. "So where did you find Barney, hmmmmm?"

Todd held me tighter. "He likes older guys. Besides, he's ours."

As Todd and Tony bantered on, others joined them. Soon, Rex returned with four more men, including the host. It became evident that Todd and Rex were very popular and respected people.

I allowed myself the fantasy of living with Todd and Rex and being invited to lots of parties. I saw the three of us, going off on cruises to South America, there to see the Brazilian Mardi Gras. I reached further and saw myself living with a single lifemate in a house like our host's. It would be surrounded by live oaks and we'd have a couple of dogs and perhaps some horses.

And then I though of K.O., and a pain shot through my entire body. I almost cried out his name and wondered if he was sad and lonely and thinking of me.

The party went on into the wee hours; I danced often and drank too much. At one point, people began walking off into the bushes, followed by others. Later, people were having sex in the open. Rex exclaimed that it was wilder than the New Orleans bars.

"Fat Tuesday," February 19

And then it was time for breakfast, followed by a fast cleanup, then on to another party brunch. After that, a quick nap, then on to downtown Lafayette for the big parade.

For a few hours, at least, I forgot about the longing and confusion inside me. I became a small boy again. I reached out to catch the plastic and aluminum beads and coins being thrown from the floats, collecting them in all my pockets.

At one point, I turned to see where Rex and Todd were and found Rex looking at me fondly. He was describing my exuberant behavior to Todd, whose smile was as warm as the afternoon Louisiana sun.

Wednesday, February 20

It was the evening before my departure, and we sat on the front porch in a swing, watching the sunset. Todd sat in the middle and both Rex and I nestled our heads against his big chest. We both absently fondled Todd's stomach, legs and crotch.

I spoke lazily. "And now there is a long, long streak of magenta and the yellow has turned into a soft orange."

"Soft orange," repeated Todd.

"Growing deeper now," I added.

I was entranced by the combination of the sunset, the faint creaking of the swing chains, and the warmth of Todd's body.

"There's purple now. The magenta streak is now purple. The orange is nearly orange-red."

Todd shook Rex. "Why can't you describe the sunsets

as eloquently as Barney?"

"Beat's de shit oudda me," answered Rex sleepily. "Dumb, I guess."

I chuckled. "Now there's only purple and red," I said, finishing my color commentary.

After a period of silence, Todd squeezed my shoulder. "I wish you didn't have to go, cher. We sho would like to have you stay with us."

"I have to go," I said softly. "I have to see if he's waiting for me. I have to know."

"I just don't wanna see you hurt, boy," said Rex.

"Hurt's on the horizon, Barney," added Todd.

"I know." Of course, I knew.

"Well, we'll be here waiting for you," said Todd.

"You welcome here anytime, cher. Anytime," added Rex.

"I know. But you know, I need what you two have. I need someone who will make me number one in his life. I need it and I deserve it," I said.

There was another period of silence as the horizon became dim and darkness fell.

"Oh, sweet Barney," began Todd. "You're like an albatross, flyin' over that big, angry ocean. Go find your man, Barney. I know you'll find him soon. I feel with all my heart you will." He placed his hands on my face. "I can feel all the love you got to give him, cher." He kept his hands on my face and turned to Rex. "Feel the magic around us, Rex? No one has ever come into our lives and touched us this way." He leaned over and kissed me lightly. "Go find him, Barney, then bring him here. This is your home cher. I feel it in my bones."

THIRTEEN

BRANDYWINE

Thursday, February 21

Between Baton Rouge and the Mississippi line, I heard the song, "Ninety-nine Miles from L.A." on the radio, and my mind went back to that morning I left Eldon behind. The song lingered for mile after mile, relating to Eldon, then to K.O. I began to feel like a ping pong ball and wondered why I couldn't extract the one true voice from the cacophony screaming within my head. *Why couldn't there be one path? Why couldn't I hear what my gut advised?*

But the closer I got, the more I realized deep inside that the experience that lay ahead was mine to experience. It was life. It was a door to another chapter.

It was what my gut advised.

Friday, February 22

The town of Brandywine, Georgia consisted of an old section and the newer college campus, complete with all the peripheral businesses that a college supports. I counted four motels and checked into the one closest to the football stadium, reasoning that a small, one-story building adjacent to it was probably the sports administration building. I found a liquor store and bought some gin and vermouth for later, then drove around the campus, looking for K.O.'s Bronco.

It eventually dawned on me that I'd not seen another white person since I arrived. Granted, I could tell that certain people were looking at me inquisitively, but the townspeople looked friendly enough.

I found the Bronco parked in front of the building I had pegged for the sports administration building, then I drove back to the motel. Sitting in a chair in front of the window, I stared at K.O.'s vehicle less than a block away. I sipped on a martini and waited.

At four in the afternoon, two young women walked out of the building, prompting a surge of anxiety. I stood up and strained to better focus my eyes. Soon, two men walked out, followed by a tall, thin young man bouncing a basketball.

Then K.O. came out, accompanied by a thirtyish, voluptuous woman with a complexion slightly lighter than K.O.'s. She stayed very near him and placed her arm around his waist. K.O. bent down and kissed her, grabbing her hand and swinging their arms together like children as they walked to the Bronco. He unlocked the passenger side, depositing the woman with a nibble on her ear. Then, going around the back of the car, he glanced toward the motel and paused, apparently seeing my van.

I numbly left the motel room with my drink in-hand and walked to the curb of the main drag. I somberly watched as the Bronco left the campus and pulled up to a red light, not twenty feet away. K.O. glanced askance at me as the woman talked animatedly. Then he gazed squarely at me with a look of profound sorrow and perhaps a tinge of fleeting ambivalence.

I toasted him, tears rolling down my cheeks, then watched him drive away.

Sunday, February 24

I could vaguely remember driving through Alabama and Mississippi. By the time I reached Baton Rouge, I had pushed K.O.'s memory into oblivion. I blamed no one for the experience and resolved to abstain from consummating love with a married man. Then, about the time I was attempting the same resolve with gay couples, I came face-to-face with Todd's eyes and Rex's smile.

At first, Rex and Todd were elated that I was back, but they became saddened when I announced that I was going to Mexico to think things out. Only after promising to come back soon and leaving my van in their driveway, was I able to get their blessings.

I stayed for only one night, then Todd and Rex reluctantly drove me to New Orleans that cold, rainy Sunday morning to catch a plane for Mazatlan. Although they wanted to see me off, I insisted upon being deposited in front of the terminal.

Opting for a layover in Mexico City instead of New Orleans, I caught the next flight out. Enroute, I captured all the fond memories of Carlos and convinced myself that this would be it: the last attempt at forging a relationship. I would stop hiding my wealth; we would pool our resources and become jet setters. We would have Rex and Todd drive down my van and take them on a cruise around the world.

Monday, February 25

Carlos met me with his limousine at the Mazatlan airport. While the big chauffeur drove with an stoic expression, Carlos and I had wild, rough sex in the ample back seat. While Carlos was sucking my cock and lapping at my testicles, I became engrossed in the bulging shoulders of the chauffeur. At one point, while changing positions, I met the chauffeur's eyes in the rear-view mirror and felt a rush of ecstasy as I came prematurely. I knew then that Carlos would not be the one.

FOURTEEN

NO PLACE FOR A SATYR

Saturday, March 9

Many times I searched my own motives for staying on and not admitting the truth to Carlos. I knew that the longer I stayed, the messier it would be, come time to move on. But I wanted the unending party, the fine food, the trips by yacht to places like Acapulco, San Salvador and Panama City. I wanted to quell the relentless haunting by the sweet memories of Eldon and the bitter ones of Jerry, K.O. and Ralph.

But it was only a matter of a few days before paradise began to crumble. It had to do with Carlos' growing jealousy; he was becoming so possessive that he wouldn't allow me to travel alone. Sex with him became dull and painstaking. His impotence returned as my mouth lost its magic. It got to the point that I had to work on him for over an hour just to get him to come.

Those times when he was called away on real estate matters, I attempted to get closer to Pablo, the chauffeur, by trying my Spanish out on him. Pablo had to know how badly I wanted him, but he was terrified of Carlos. But in spite of his fear, Pablo and I became buddies . . . but only when Carlos was away.

That weekend, Carlos decided that we should take the yacht on a voyage down the coast to Acapulco. I suppose he thought that the trip would somehow put some spark back into our relationship. We got as far as Manzanillo when Carlos and the cook had to go ashore on the launch to shop for produce, meat and fruits. He insisted that I go along, but I convinced him that I had an upset stomach and shouldn't ride in the launch.

When the launch was halfway to shore, I sought out Pablo. Unable to find him below deck, I searched topside and found him sitting atop the flying bridge with his legs draped over the guard rail. It was as if he was offering his cock to the some sun god.

Discovering Pablo's bathing suit under the bridge, I silently walked around the perimeter of the ship, trying to find the best angle for viewing his naked crotch. Finding it on the port side mid-ship, I stared up hungrily. Potent desire seized me and I climbed up to the flying bridge like a leopard stalking a monkey. Risking serious injury, I inched my body around a narrow ledge until my face was directly in front of his delicious-looking jewels. I visually feasted upon his powerful wrestler's body, especially his extraordinarily huge biceps and pectoral muscles. His crotch was shaven and his heavy, circumcised cock and smooth balls lay basking in the sun. They were like prey, unaware of the leopard in the tree.

"Pablo," I whispered.

Pablo's eyes sprung open, and he jerked in surprise, rippling his massive body. "*Señor*!"

"Pablo, just relax."

"*Señor*, you will fall," Pablo said, grabbing me and pulling me onto the platform with him.

I placed my arms around his thighs and quickly went down on him.

"Señor, por favor, no!"

"Yes, Pablo! You're driving me fucking *crazy*!"

"No, *señor*!" yelled Pablo, resisting, yet careful not to push me twenty feet to my death.

I sucked the slightly salty cock and was sure I could taste Pablo's panic. It was as if his cock had gone into shock.

"Please, *señor*, I will lose my job if he sees." He frantically looked out toward the shore for the launch.

I looked also, but the launch had disappeared. "See?"

His cock began to stiffen and I could feel less resistance. Eventually, Pablo relaxed and watched me with a strange ambivalent look. Soon, he placed his legs back over the railing and allowed himself to moan and run his fingers through my hair.

As his body grew more pliable and it became obvious that he was beginning to enjoy himself, he slowly stood up. He locked his beefy hands behind my head and began pumping his cock rhythmically into my mouth. It was obvious that he was a genuine top man, the type who probably inspired the phrase, "he knows how to throw a mean fuck into you."

Pablo gradually began to change gears and pumped his cock more forcefully, his testicles slapping at my chin and neck. Soon his expression took on a sadistic nature and he forcefully rammed his cock into my throat, locking his back in an arch and flexing all his muscles.

He grunted, then cried out in ecstasy, frightening the gulls circling overhead.

I imagined white-hot lava crashing into my mouth and rumbling down a quivering throat. I willed myself inside my mouth and rode currents of steaming semen into infinity.

That night, Pablo served Carlos and me an elegant dinner by candle light. The servant seemed very nervous, and I wondered if Carlos noticed it. Halfway through the meal, Carlos showed me a partial erection and suggested that we have sex under the stars. I begged off, however, claiming that my stomach was still upset.

When I was sure that Carlos was asleep, I went down one level to Pablo's cabin and silently went inside. As expected, he was awake and fondling a painfully hard cock. I eagerly got into bed with him.

Sunday, March 10

Near three that morning, I made my way back to the master suite. As I climbed into bed, Carlos growled, "Where the fuck you been?"

I insisted that I was out on deck, but Carlos didn't believe me at first. He even questioned the cook. And then he questioned Pablo, who coolly denied knowing anything. Eventually, Carlos backed off.

Monday, March 11

By the end of my second week, the situation had become unbearable. The yacht stayed in the cove and mostly we stayed close to the villa. Carlos watched me very closely, making me very uncomfortable.

About the time I'd planned to advise him of my departure, he asked me to take Emeraldo for a walk to get the animal some hibiscus flowers. Although I suspected that Carlos was up to something, I agreed to do anything that would give me a chance to get away and think about how I would break off the relationship. I also hoped that Pablo would see me departing and follow without Carlos seeing him. I felt I had to have Pablo one last time.

With Emeraldo on a leash, I walked down the private beach to a clump of rocks, then went into a maze of flora, which

included palm trees, hibiscus and mangroves. I picked several flowers and fed them to Emeraldo. Finding a sunny clearing surrounded by dense foliage, I stripped and waited for Pablo, just in case.

I heard voices and realized that I'd fallen asleep. Sitting up with a start, I looked toward the entrance to the clearing and heard approaching footfalls in the sand. And then Carlos appeared, looking down at me with contempt.

"I thought this would lure out the cockroaches," he said softly yet angrily. "I followed Pablo here, Barney. I just fired him because of you."

"For what?" I asked, trying to look innocent.

"He had his dick out, stroking it in anticipation, headed this way. The two of you must fuck every chance you get," spat Carlos with disgust. "It's obvious now why you tired of me. You're a whore!"

"Satyr," I corrected.

"WHORE!" he screamed.

I arose and got back into my clothes. "He's a good man, Carlos. I'm not worth his firing. I'm leaving anyway." I glanced back at Carlos, who was looking around the area in panic.

"Where is Emeraldo?" He frantically ran around the perimeter of the clearing, yelling the iguana's name. He thrashed into the thick underbrush and fell away, his hands scratched and bleeding. "Did you tie him somewhere?"

"I fell asleep," I said meekly. "He . . . he must have . . . Surely he couldn't have gone far."

"Emeraldo! Emeraldo!" Carlos suddenly became silent and listened carefully. Hearing nothing, he whimpered, "Emeraldo, where are you, my baby?"

I watched as Carlos made fists out of his hands and slowly turned around, his teeth clenched. "I'll kill you if he's lost." He ran out toward the beach and tried to enter the thicket further down.

As I heard movement in the underbrush and mangrove, I decided that I'd better start walking to Mazatlan. I ran back to the villa and fetched my wallet. Putting on good shoes, I thought of calling the police, but knew that would be futile.

Passing a glaring Pablo sitting dumbfounded behind the wheel of a beaten up '69 Catalina, I turned and said, "I'm sorry. Uh . . . I don't suppose you want to drive me to Mazatlan?" I searched Pablo's face for sympathy but found hostility instead.

"If he cannot find Emeraldo, you will not leave Mexico alive, *señor*." He waved and drove the sputtering car down the driveway.

I ran along the road until I was winded, then I tried to flag down a ride with an old man in a pickup. Failing, I decided it might be safer to walk along the beach instead. As I reached it, I looked ahead and saw that the tide was in, blocking my way with crashing surf and rocks. Then I heard the sound of a launch and scurried into the bush, my skin crawling from raw fear. I sat quietly in the sand, my arms wrapped around my legs.

"I'm too old to run and I'm too old to fight," I whispered. "God, what am I going to do?"

I'd become almost catatonic, waiting for nightfall. It rained and I became drenched, but I remained still. The launch had gone by at least four times and the tide had reached my waist. Still, I didn't move. As the sun began to set, I climbed up into a tree to determine if I could chart my way up the coast. I decided that it could be done during the next low tide. Then, as the darkness closed in, I followed the coast line, aided only by a dim quarter moon.

Tuesday, March 12

By sunrise, I had reached a town I remembered passing through from the airport to the villa. Very few people were up and about, so, in order not to be conspicuous, I decided to wait awhile before trying to hire a taxi. I found a clean stretch of sand above the high tide line and lay down, falling asleep almost instantly.

Near mid-morning, I awakened with a painful sunburn and cursed my stupidity. I surveyed the area and saw that the town's activities were in full swing. I saw a sign which read "Farmacia" and quickly went there to get something for my sunburn. Buying a tube of analgesic ointment, I spread it over my face and arms and rushed to a street vendor selling fly-covered fruit and fried pigskin. I devoured a handful of pigskins then quickly attacked a banana and part of a pineapple. Noticing that people were staring at me, I moved away and began looking for a taxi.

Reaching what looked like the main drag, I spotted a beaten-up taxi parked in front of a hotel. I approached the driver.

"Hello," I said, feeling stupid. "Can you take me to Mazatlan?"

"No," said the driver, looking at my clothing.

For the first time, I saw the rips in my trousers and blood stains on my shirt. I pulled out my wallet and showed the driver a couple of twenty-dollar bills.

The driver looked hungrily at the money and nodded, then he looked past me and frowned. I followed his gaze and felt my skin tingle as a young policeman inside a squad car stared at me from across the street.

I turned to the driver. "Uh . . . I think I'll take another taxi." I put my wallet away and walked away from the policeman.

I could feel the cop's stare. At the next intersection, I turned the corner and walked faster until I reached the next block. Looking back, I found that the squad car wasn't following, so I headed for the highway to Mazatlan.

Reaching the busy thoroughfare, I looked for taxis but found only pickups loaded with chickens, produce trucks of every shape and size, and a multitude of bicycles and older cars—all apparently heading to or coming from Mazatlan. Making sure no police were around, I cautiously held out my thumb and began walking backwards in the direction of Mazatlan.

I felt so vulnerable and alien as the people driving by gawked at me, pointing me out to others inside the vehicles. The reality of my not making it back to New Orleans in one piece came to me for the first time. The thought brought icy fingers of fright to my neck and spine. Then the feeling doubled as a police car pulled into traffic and came toward me.

My hand quickly dropped, and I walked as calmly as possible, watching out of the corner of my eye as the police car slowly passed me.

Just about the time I was about to sigh in relief, the squad car pulled off the road and backed up to me, covering me with a cloud of dust.

"Alto," ordered the same policeman as before. He stepped out. *"Americano?"*

"Yes," I croaked, my mind fiercely plotting escape routes.

The policeman held out his hand. "I.D., *señor*."

Slowly, I reached for my wallet, then hesitated as the

policeman's radio began blaring something in Spanish. The policeman got back inside and answered his radio. A conversation in rapid Spanish ensued, but it was distorted by static. Then, I thought I heard the name "Ferreira," as in Carlos Ferreira, and bolted across the highway, miraculously dodging a speeding school bus.

I ran into a plaza filled with people, then into a church. While trying to catch my breath, I walked to the rear of the church, past two startled priests, then out a side door, onto a narrow street.

I walked briskly until I was sure that I had distanced myself from the cop and had reached the outskirts of the town. Winded and weak, I walked into a citrus grove and collapsed.

A few minutes later, I heard a car drive up and stop across the street from me. I peered around a tree and saw a young man get out of the car and rush inside a house, leaving his engine running. Wondering if I had just witnessed divine intervention, I ran to the car, got in and let it roll down a slight hill before gunning the engine and speeding away.

On the highway only a few minutes, traffic came to a halt due to an accident up ahead. I wept in frustration. Then I saw a marina up ahead with several fishing boats still in port.

"Wait a minute, jerk," I said. "Shit, they probably have the airport watched. What you need is to get to . . . to . . . " I looked at the marina again. " To Baja!"

I pulled over and abandoned the car, quickly walking to the marina.

Only one captain was there, and he spoke no English, so I resorted to sign language, pointing in the direction of the gulf. "Baja California," I said. Then I remembered a little Spanish. "*Voy a Baja* . . . Uh . . . . *Vamos a Baja* . . . shit."

The old captain registered understanding. "Ahah! *Si, Baja*." He smiled and rubbed his thumb and forefinger together, winking at two younger men cleaning the boat.

"*Mucho dinero*, huh?" I smirked. "It figures." I pulled out my wallet.

I showed the man three twenties, but he wasn't impressed. I added another, then another, and finally my last one before the old man nodded and gestured for me to board.

Relieved to the point of tears, I boarded, and the fishing boat headed out to sea.

Darkness came and I could see a few lights ahead. Confused by the absence of city lights, I stood at the rail and tried to visualize where we were. Abruptly, a partially destroyed pier appeared and the fishing boat came alongside.

"Baja!" yelled the captain over the din of the motor, motioning for me to get off.

"What?" I looked over the side at the rotting pier. "This isn't La Paz!"

"No La Paz, señor!" yelled the captain, pointing northward, up the coast. *"Vente cinco kilometros . . . La Paz! Santiago, aqui!"* He pointed to the west.

"Take me to La Paz!" I demanded. "I don't know Santiago. I'll be stranded without cash in a small town."

The old man waved his hand and spat out a hostile phrase in Spanish, prompting the two younger men to grab me and push me onto the pier, where I fell.

As the boat sped away, I felt my joints to see if anything had broken, then hobbled to my feet. There was pain in my right ankle, but I could tell it was only a sprain.

I followed a narrow road inland until I came to what appeared to be a highway. Remembering the direction the captain had pointed, I started walking that way.

Only three cars passed me in the period of an hour, none stopping to offer a ride. There was no sign of a place called Santiago and my ankle was killing me.

And then I saw headlights on the horizon ahead and felt an awful premonition. The car lights illuminated me, and I could hear loud salsa music and wild laughter. As the car passed, the driver yelled something, and the auto screeched to a halt. I looked around in the moonlight to see if there was some place to hide, but the terrain was flat and treeless. Instinctively, I pulled out my wallet with my precious credit cards and dropped it into some weeds along the road shoulder. As the car made a U-turn and headed in my direction, I counted the paces from the wallet as I continued walking, hoping they would leave me alone.

At twenty-five paces, I turned to face my new threat. I was too tired to run—too weary to resist. The car pulled alongside me and the dash lights reflected off the sadistic eyes of three young men who were either drunk or high on drugs. The man on the passenger side looked me up and down, smiling insanely.

"No *dinero*," I said weakly. I pulled my pockets inside out and turned 360 degrees. "Please, take me to La Paz."

The man laughed and said something in Spanish to the driver.

As if in slow motion, all three men got out of the car, spinning me around and around, searching my pockets. Finding nothing, they became enraged and started kicking and pummeling me.

I fell to the ground and looked up into the barrel of a revolver. I saw a flash of light and heard a POP, which echoed weirdly in my head.

"Oh, no," I said softly. "Dear God . . . "

Another flash of light, followed by a BOOM, followed by my own voice: "NO, NO, NO, NO, NO!"

I heard the car speed away and felt numbness permeating in my abdomen and chest. "Not now," I cried. "Oh, God, not alone . . . . Not here."

I seemed to drift like a balloon as a gentle warmth enveloped me.

FIFTEEN

THE EDGE

Wednesday, March 13

A diffused image of Eldon came to me. I watched him speak to someone out of view—someone he obviously found exciting. The image widened and I saw myself, sitting opposite Eldon in the restaurant booth in Arizona, smiling lovingly, bleeding profusely about the chest and abdomen. The image disintegrated, replaced by another of several nebulous forms of people facing me in a semicircle. Waiting for me?

Then blackness, as I heard many voices, all speaking excitedly in Spanish. I felt jostled, probed, then . . .

I saw Eldon's feverish eyes, surrounded by beads of perspiration. Eldon: "Baby! Oh! Baby! Goddamn, what an ass!"

More jostling. Cold metal touched my body. Powerful lights. My eyelids parted, closing quickly because of the brilliance. More voices in Spanish, somehow expressing urgency. Bright images of nurses, scurrying about. A man in bloodstained white straddled my waist, pushing down on my

chest. The man said something in Spanish and a nurse handed him fat electrodes.

I began to drift into space, toward a massive light.

Cheers from several people standing around the man holding the pads of a defibrillator. More jostling. Movement.

I saw myself lying in a hospital bed. My body was covered with tubes and wires and I.V. needles. A monitor registered my pulse rate, sending blips across a screen.

"Eldon," I heard myself say.

The nebulous forms appeared again and I stood facing them. I saw a woman. Was it my wife? And then I smelled a familiar, sweet perfume and knew it was Ruth. She looked at me and smiled. Her features were vague, but I knew it was she. I saw my father and mother, then I recognized my brother who had died back in fifty-two in a fire.

"Not now," I protested. "I haven't found him yet."

I fell back in time to a sultry afternoon on a river in North Carolina. It was 1935, and I sat on a sandbar, watching my short, burly father wrestle my sixteen-year-old big brother in waist-deep water. All three of us were nude, having stopped at the swimming hole to escape from the raging heat. My father was handsome and had dark curly hair and penetrating tan eyes. His heavy arms rippled as he threw my brother up into the air toward me, causing a big splash and inundating me with water. Winded, my father pulled himself atop a flat rock and collapsed on his back. As my brother began splashing water on me, I caught several glimpses of my father, lying on the rock, his fat penis growing under the bright sunlight.

Soon my brother stopped slapping the water and followed my gaze to our father. He glanced back at me, as if confused by the hunger in my eyes.

The image drifted away and I was again standing before my deceased family. My father reached out to me and drew me near. We merged, and a marvelous sense of joy and ecstasy enveloped me. The taste of sweet, ethereal semen came to my tongue.

"I love you, Dad," I seemed to say.

"Find him." It wasn't really a voice. It was more like a semi-thought/semi-voice emanating from the separating form.

Thursday, March 14

I awakened, high on pain killers, lying in a hospital bed. The room was long, and I could see others in beds on either side of me. I counted two tubes exiting my torso from huge bandages. An I.V. was attached to my right hand. Wires led from my chest to a monitor to my left. "I'm alive," I murmured, grinning.

I glanced at my neighbor to the left, an unconscious old woman. To my right, I saw a very old man with blue lips. He didn't move.

A petite nurse walked by, smiling as she saw that I was awake. "*Buenos tardes, señor*," she said sweetly. "I come back, okay?"

I heard her call for someone and presently a tall, dark, middle-aged man approached my bed. A doctor appeared and said something to the tall man, who held up his hands as if to calm him down.

"*Señor* Wilkinson?" he asked, his brow folded in seriousness.

"Yes," I attempted to say, managing only a raspy whisper.

The man held out identification and a badge. "I am Detective Sanchez. I'm sorry to disturb you, but I have to ask you some questions."

"It's okay," I managed to whisper. My voice was coming back.

"Are these the men who attacked you?" He handed me three mug shots.

I studied them, then pointed to one. "That's the one on the passenger side." I felt an acute pain in my right chest and coughed, causing more pain.

The detective must have noticed the panic in my face.

"Okay, *señor*," Sanchez soothed. "Be calm. That's all we need for now."

The pain subsided and I sighed with relief. "What happened to me?" I asked, wheezing.

Sanchez smiled. "You are very lucky man, my friend. These three animals try to rob you, then shoot you twice. They leave you for dead. Some fishermen found you a short time later."

"My . . . my wallet."

"It was nearby. There was no cash, but there were two credit cards, identification and a number to call in case of an emergency. The fishermen are honest, hard working . . . "

"It's all there," I assured him. "No problem. I had no more money, just two credit cards."

The doctor walked up behind the detective again and mumbled something in Spanish.

"Okay, okay," Sanchez said impatiently, watching the doctor move away. "*Cabron*," he added under his breath.

I coughed again, grimacing in pain.

"I get the nurse," he said, turning.

"No, wait." I reached for him. "Those photos. You caught them?"

"They are dead, *señor*." He looked serious again. "They were crazed with every dangerous drug imaginable. They shoot four people last night—one, a policeman. He and you are the only ones to survive."

I relaxed my hand and Sanchez turned to leave, only to falter and glance back. His face recorded the sudden realization of something important.

"*Señor* Wilkinson, one other thing," the detective said. "How did you get to Baja?"

I smiled, immediately realizing that they hadn't traced me to Mazatlan. Dreamily, just before drifting off into a deep sleep, I said, "We were all shitfaced . . . took off . . . took off from San Diego in this guy's yacht . . . fell over . . . fell overboard."

I awakened sometime later in searing pain. A big, broad nurse came in and smiled proudly. "My miracle! You pulled through. I told them, 'Yes, I think so, he will pull through.'"

I couldn't help but smile, even though the pain was becoming intolerable. "It . . . it hurts pretty bad."

Her expression suddenly changed to sincere concern. She checked out my chest and nodded. "The cough, it opens the wound. We'll fix." She quickly walked away.

Returning with a young doctor, she gave me an injection as the doctor adjusted the tube in my chest.

"You sleep now, Barney," she said.

I found her use of my first name very comforting. For the first time since New Orleans, I felt that I was among friends. I smiled up at her and drifted off.

SIXTEEN

ANOTHER CHANCE

Saturday, March 16

I awakened inside a sunny, private room and sensed that I had been out for some time. There was a bouquet of flowers on a table. Although I was still attached to tubes and an ever-present I.V., the monitor was absent. I was also in much less pain.

I located a buzzer and pressed it.

The big nurse entered my room. "You had a good sleep, Barney?" She efficiently checked out all my vitals. "You've been a sick boy for two days."

"Oh?"

She stuck a thermometer inside my mouth and checked my pulse, then said, "You caught a kidney infection." She looked down at me and shook her head. "We almost lost you again."

"Oh, Lordy," I moaned.

"But I pull you through. I take good care of my patients."

"Boy, I believe that."

She suddenly appeared sad.

"What's wrong?"

"I will miss you."

I looked at her incredulously. "I'm being discharged?" I looked at the flowers, wondering who they could possibly be from.

"Not quite. You are being flown by medivac to Los Angeles. They must think there are no good hospitals in Mexico," she grumbled indignantly.

"Who's doing it?"

"Who do you think?" said Eldon from the doorway.

The shock left me speechless. I closed my eyes, preparing for another bizarre hallucination.

"Barney?" The nurse's voice sounded urgent.

I opened my eyes, expecting Eldon to disappear, but he was still there, looking at me with concern.

The nurse looked down at me and quickly felt my pulse.

"I've seen you so many times in the past few days, but you were never real. I'm wondering if you're real now." The nurse glanced around at Eldon and shrugged, then she left the room.

Eldon walked to me and placed his hand on my arm. As I felt the heat of his body, a flood of tears ran down my cheeks.

"You must not've been too serious about leaving me," said Eldon. "You still have me down as the one to call in case of emergency."

I grabbed his big hand and buried my wet face in it.

"I understand that you called for me the instant they got your heart beating the second time." He winked as I kissed his hand and held it tightly. "I understand that you said it quite a bit. Sounds to me like you're still stuck on me."

"Maybe," I said playfully, trying to compose myself. "How's Jerry?"

"I have no idea."

I looked for seriousness and found it.

Eldon sat in a chair, his hand still clamped between mine. "A week after you left, he started drinking again. He tried to hide it, but it became obvious. I'd find the vodka bottles hidden behind the couch and under the bed. He started showing up drunk at work and almost got a client killed in an auto accident." He sighed. "He told me that he'd lied about the drink you made for him"

I felt a profound sorrow for Jerry. "So where is he?"

"Atlanta, I believe, with his mother. He called once and told me he was sorry." It was time for Eldon to search my eyes. "So, what happened to K.O.?"

"He ran off to Georgia to marry a woman."

He nodded. "Looks like we both took a wrong turn."

I nodded, smiling. "Don't you want to know why I'm in Mexico?"

"I called Carlos a couple of days ago."

I squeezed his hand. "You didn't . . . "

"Relax. I told him that I haven't seen you for weeks. After the hospital notified me about you, I called him and felt him out. I told him I was looking for you, which was the truth, really. He's pretty pissed about losing Emeraldo and could probably get you locked up in a Mexican prison for a few years. That's why I'm flying you to LAX today."

"You were looking for me?" A feeling of sweet joy overcame me. Suddenly nothing seemed complicated any more. Eldon had always been the one. "I think I want to forget all about Jerry, K.O. and Carlos." *And Ralph, too,* I thought, wondering if I would ever tell Eldon about that fiasco.

"That sounds reasonable," Eldon agreed. "Let's just concentrate on Eldon and Barney from now on."

The tears began to flow again. "Shit!" I said, embarrassed.

"You want to come back to me?"

"Yes," I choked.

Eldon sighed, obviously relieved about everything. "We have a slight change at home."

"What's that?"

"Well, we *have* no home."

"Say what?"

"Well, I sold it to keep the business going, but the escrow doesn't close for another thirty days."

"And the business?"

"Sold that, too, and almost lost my shirt. The industry went dry." He seemed concerned about how I would react. "We'll go back, get you well, and finalize everything."

I could only shake my head in wonder. "And how in the hell were you going to pay for my medivac."

"Oh, I still have a little cash still."

I rolled up my eyes. "You have no idea how much cash you're *gonna* have."

"What? You win the lottery?" He chuckled.

"Never mind. It'll all come out sooner or later."

His mood darkened. "I let you down, Barney. I should have known that you had to go out and sew a bunch of wild oats. I've already done that, but it never dawned on me that a sixty-three-year-old needed to do it, even if he *did* come out in his sixties." He tried to sound more up-beat. "After you're well and can travel again, we'll shove off and take our time on deciding where to live. If you don't mind, I'm sort of tired of smog, grass fires, mud slides and earthquakes. Maybe I can get another business going with what cash I have left."

"How about lots of rain, heat and humidity, with alligators and swamps?" I proposed.

"No earthquakes?"

"No earthquakes. Maybe a few hurricanes."

"Sure, why not."

SEVENTEEN

REDEMPTION FOR THE SATYR

January 18, 1987

He was the final obsession, but I knew that it was all but impossible. Having waited on a young woman whose car needed a quart of oil, Charlie Guidry handed her change and rushed over to service my Mercedes. Thunder rumbled in the distance.

"Barney, my man! *Bon jour, cher*!" He set the gas nozzle for a fill-up and opened up the hood to check the oil. "Angry clouds out dere." He glanced at a black line of fast-approaching clouds while I hungrily looked at his revealing crotch. He showed me the dip-stick, which indicated that the crank case was full of clean oil.

A bolt of lightning streaked down about a mile away. "They're angry, all right." I glanced up at the clouds then lowered my gaze to his crotch again.

As he checked the other fluid levels, I poured over his stocky, muscular body and willed his simple essence of cheap after-shave to waft into my nostrils. I looked around to see how many customers he had and whether we'd have a chance to talk a bit. To my delight, I was his only customer. "Today's my sixty-fifth birthday, Charlie."

He flashed his incredible green eyes and smiled, exposing healthy white teeth made even more dazzling against his weathered, ruddy face. "Well, happy happy to you. *Laissez les bon temps roulez, cher*. I bet dey trow you some party."

"Yeah, let the good times roll." I looked around, hoping that no one would drive up. Then it began to rain and another bolt of lightning streaked across the sky.

"You got a wish for de cake?" He closed the hood and gingerly wiped off his fingerprints with a cloth.

"Yeah. I'm going to wish I could get into your pants."

He laughed and walked around to man the nozzle, looking at the spinning numbers. "Same question, same answer, cher. I don't do dat ting." He shook his head in amusement, which I found exceptionally civil. After all, since Eldon and I had moved to Lafayette and bought the Cuban's mansion, I'd probably propositioned him during every fill-up.

"You know what they say about birthdays," I teased.

"What?"

"Sometimes birthdays are lucky days."

The pump shut off and he topped off the gas tank. "I wish you luck, Barney . . . *with somebody else's dick.*" He winked, screwed on my gas tank cap, and turned to go inside the station. My propositions had become an entertaining game to him.

I followed him inside, rushing as the clouds released sheets of rain.

"Let's see, dat comes to twenty-tree ninety-eight."

I gave him a fifty. "One of these days, you're going to be in just the right frame of mind to try something new."

He smirked. "Not me, cher. Not old straight shooter, Charlie Guidry." He handed me change.

Lightning struck a transformer a block away and the electricity went off. High winds tore through the station, and we heard the sound of breaking glass across the street. The rain was so concentrated that we couldn't see over twenty or thirty feet away. I closed the door and looked at Charlie's face, which projected fear.

"Better get over here with me, away from the window."

He took my advice, and we stood together in the growing darkness.

"I could send you to the moon and back in fifteen seconds," I said softly.

He said nothing, and I wondered what his silence meant. I looked at him and found him petrified. I placed my arm around him and held him close to me, amazed that he didn't pull away.

More glass broke, this time closer to the station. A large drum rolled by the window, ramming into a gas pump.

Knowing it was now or never at all, I took out my top plate and slowly knelt before him, looking up at him pleadingly. He looked down at me dreamily and unzipped his pants, pulling out his huge, throbbing cock.

"Don't say any ting. Jes have your way."

That same odor of after-shave, oil and gasoline merged with the essence of his maleness. How potent it was! I felt a part of Charlie's body, aware of heartbeat, thought, glandular secretions . . . everything. The magnificent cock became red and engorged with fiercely pumped blood, and I slid it carefully down into my throat. I glanced up at this most illusive obsession, whose breathtaking eyes registered a combination of shock and rapture as the reflection of lightning danced over them.

Two crackling bolts crashed into the earth on either side of the building, shaking the ground and bringing goose bumps to both our bodies. Again I glanced up and saw that his mouth was agape with a lustful smile. He growled softly, then shook so hard that I had trouble holding on. As a gigantic streak of electricity sizzled overhead, he gasped and cried out, flooding my mouth and throat with an incredible bounty.

As he leaned against a soft drink machine with his eyes closed and a last rivulet of semen about to drop from his still-fat but flaccid penis, I pulled my cock out and masturbated between his legs to the accompaniment of rumbling thunder.

As my penis softened, I kneaded his and extracted the last of his essence. "You have no idea what you've done for me, Charlie. You were my last obsession. You're my redemption."

Of course, he had no idea what I was talking about and gently pulled his cock away from me, stuffing it inside his trousers. "It's a bad ting, what we did." His face flushed in shame.

"Today, perhaps, Charlie. *But not tomorrow*." I struggled to my feet and likewise stowed my cock away.

A bolt of lightning struck further away; the rain diminished somewhat. It became lighter outside.

"Please don't come by again . . . . Okay, Barney? You understand, don't you?"

I nodded, fully comprehending. "Whatever you say, Charlie."

I opened the door and pulled out my car keys, then looked back at him. "Perhaps you'll bury this deep within your mind. Perhaps you'll stop and think about it from time to time. There's this song that goes something like, 'The heart approaches what it yearns.' Mine did, and It found its home . . . eventually." I studied him. "Are you married, Charlie?"

"No, my wife died. Long time ago."

"You haven't had sex in years, have you?"

He looked away. "Please."

"I'm not a bad person, Charlie. I could smell your hunger, and it drove me wild. But I won't be the only one," I said, turning to leave. "Others will smell it, too. Maybe a woman, maybe a man. Don't bury it, Charlie. Let your heart approach what it yearns."

I ran to my car and watched Charlie in the rear view mirror as I quickly drove away. I knew that I had just pulled off my last bold seduction. My little odyssey was over. It was time to be a good boy for the rest of my time on earth and settle down with Eldon in our new home on the outskirts of Lafayette near Breaux Bridge. It was just about where I saw the rainbow that day back in 1984.

And it was time I got moving before I was late for my birthday party.

Cars were everywhere, forcing me to park a quarter of a mile from our house. When I walked through the front door, a large gathering of men shouted, "HAPPY BIRTHDAY!"

I saw Rex and Todd. Rex was fluttering his tongue at me as Todd's ethereal eyes seemed to be trained on a spot just above my head. I scanned the faces and recognized all the new friends and acquaintances we'd met through Rex and Todd.

Then my eyes met Eldon's. He held out his arms and I rushed into them. I kissed his neck and felt myself molding easily against him. My body fit so very nicely.

"Happy birthday, Sweety," he whispered.

"The happiest birthday," I said. "You . . . redemption . . . what more could a man want?"

The group gathered around us and started singing "Happy Birthday."

THE END

Special thanks go to CHARLES CHIARELLI, EXOCET, and THE VIKING for their editorial work on the novel. Additional thanks go to THE FRIAR and WOLVERINE for proofing and JOHN McNEILL for his insightful critique.

MODEL AND PHOTOGRAPHER PROFILES

(Continued from page 3)

AXOLOTL is retired, has written for *CR* under the name KRB, and likes music, crafts, travel and most pleasant things. He lives alone in North Carolina and would enjoy correspondence.

MERRILL is 47, 6'-4", and has enjoyed a life-long interest in spankings. He is single and looking for a top or a bottom, or a man who enjoys both--preferably slender, age 25 to 50. He lives in Idaho.

BON VIVANT is yet another Idahoan. He's single and likes to lie in the sun on the Boise River with a bottle of Champagne, bon bons and a good book. As the photo in this issue indicates, he occasionally likes to entertain there.

BEAUTIFUL DAY lives on beautiful, isolated property in rural Tennessee and likes long, sensuous sessions with any age, race. Visitors are welcome.

MR. MANAGER is a property manager in Northern California. Otherwise a nudist, he wears a kilt to Scottish gatherings.

CARL is a 58-year-old retired educator who lives in New Jersey. A single man, he loves the outdoors, gardening and travel. Only those who send a photo will get a response.

MOUNTAIN MAN, another of JOEL's mature models, lives in the Idaho mountains, where he is a logger. MM likes to trek into the woods naked and will try anything once.

THE SWIMMER is single, 66, and living the retired life in San Francisco. He would like to travel and make new friends. Inspired by masculine, younger, active guys, he enjoys swimming for fitness.

HAWFINCH is in his 70s and lives with his lifemate in the Canadian Rockies. A lively, horny, retired professor, he invites correspondence, exchange visits with all ages with similar interests.

JEEP lives in San Diego with his partner, but likes to meet all types of people, especially older, heavy-set men like Charles Durning or Wilford Brimley. He loves to travel, swim, read mysteries and horror stories.

ROBY is 37 and lives as a roommate with model SWAN in Rio de Janeiro. He enjoys movies, music, theatre and correspondence from older, hairless men over 60.

FLORES is single, 64, retired, and resides in the San Francisco wine country. He muddles along in horticulture under the surveillance of a 100 pound puppy and a 15 pound kitten. FLORES is also one of our more prolific writers of essays and articles.

JOHN BEAR is a 54-year-old Italian-American who has lived in San Francisco since 1981. He's out there looking for BIG MEN, 30-50, and will answer all letters that contain a photo.

CHELSEA WILLIAMS is one of the top professional photographers in the business and is one of our best supporters. He's currently looking for more models, so contact us for his telephone number if you are interested in a shooting session exclusively for us. Bear in mind, CHELSEA is not in the business of producing and selling portrait photographs but expects reimbursement to cover his costs.

THE TRAVELER is a rugged, wiry, thirtysomething kind of guy who likes to travel on his Harley. He always has his camera handy just in case some grey haired, stocky guy over 60 wants to be immortalized in print.

WANT TO WRITE A MODEL OR PHOTOGRAPHER?

It's easy. Just write, stamp and seal your letter inside a discreet envelope. Make sure you have enough postage for overweight and foreign letters and that your return address is on the letter. If you don't have access to U.S. stamps, send $1 or 2 international reply coupons for every 3 letters. In pencil, lightly write the model's name in the center of the envelope. Place the envelope inside a larger envelope and it mail to us.

WANT TO BE A CR OR CR CLASSICS MODEL?

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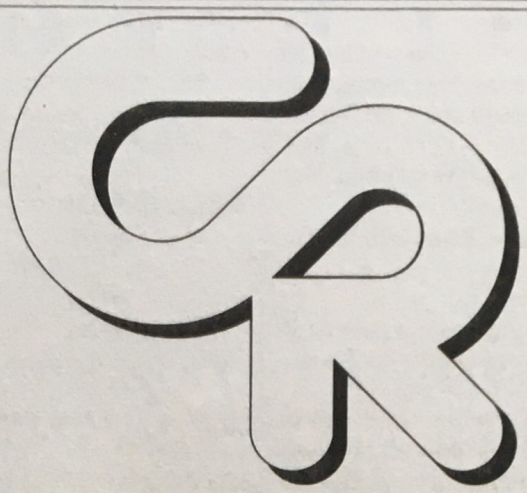

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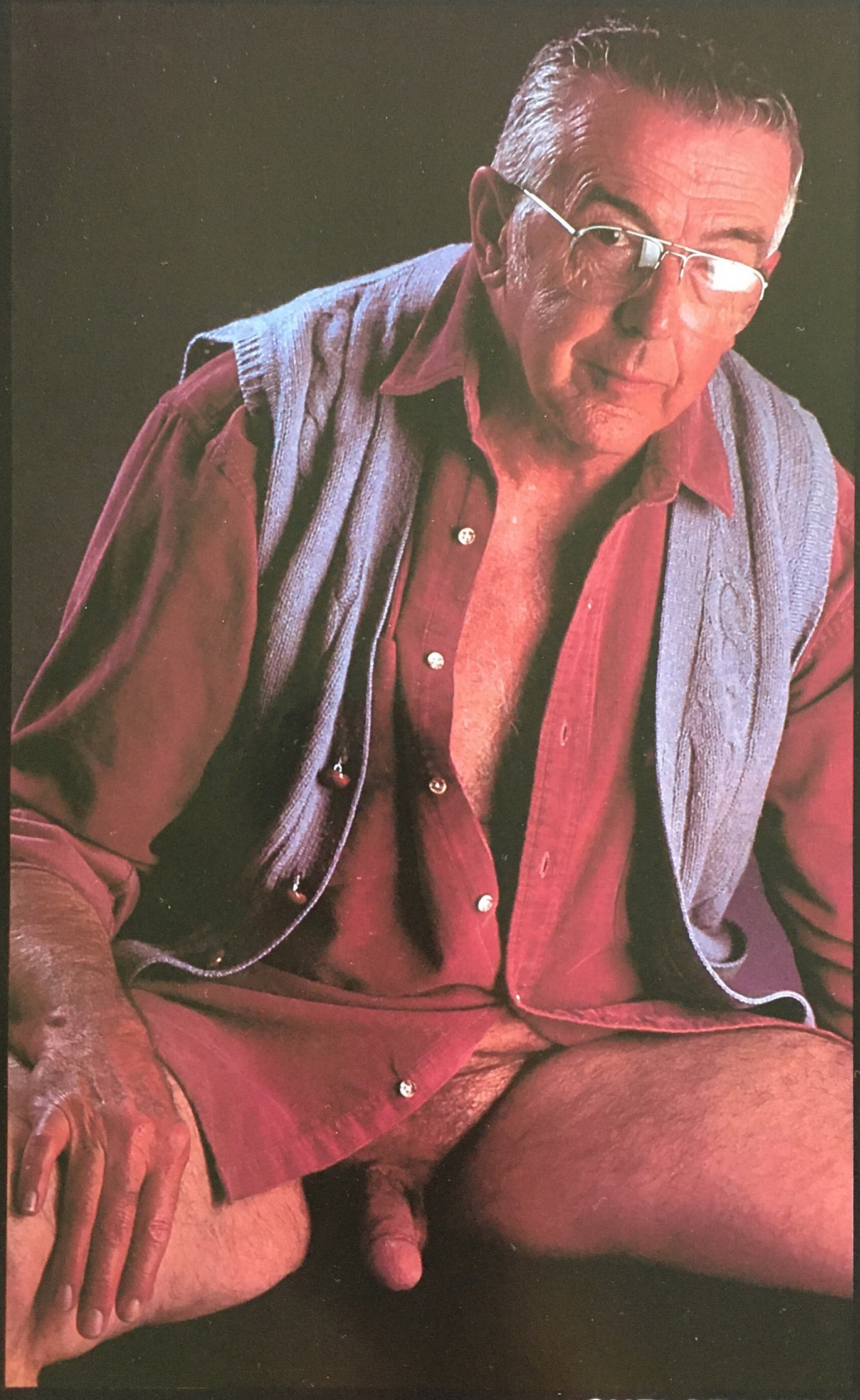

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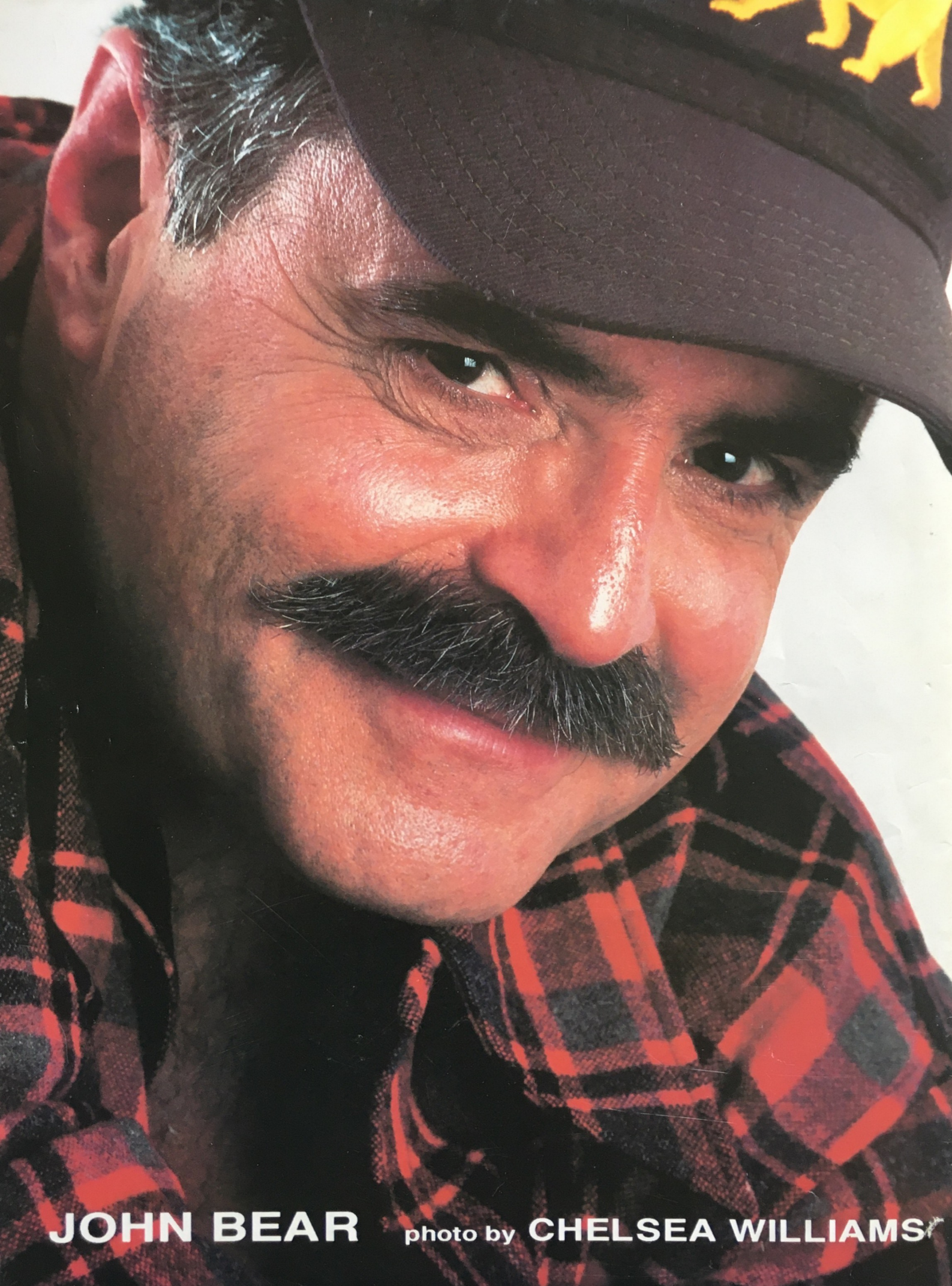

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